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RUSSIA, FINLAND AND  
THE BALTIC

by  
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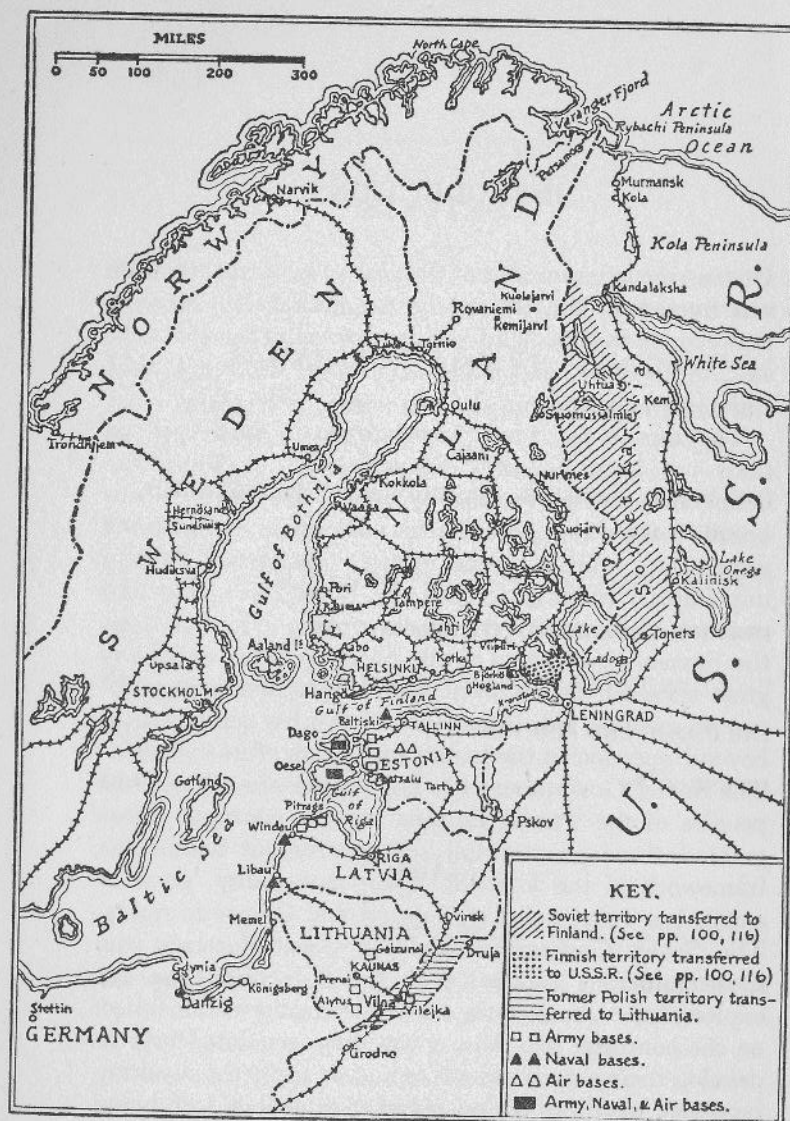
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(1) FINLAND AND THE BALTIC STATES

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## INTRODUCTION

DURING the latter months of the year 1939, world attention was riveted on and off on the negotiations in Moscow between, on the one hand, representatives of the U.S.S.R. and, on the other hand, representatives of Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Finland.

The aim of the Soviet Government in these negotiations has been honestly misunderstood by some and deliberately misrepresented by others. Doubting friends began to ask whether the Soviet Government had turned imperialist, whilst hostile critics, themselves blatant imperialists, roundly accused the Soviets of naked and unashamed aggressive imperialism. As a matter of fact, the Soviet Government is the only Government of any great state which has been and is consistently and uncompromisingly anti-imperialist. This it has demonstrated beyond question in the twenty-two years of its existence. The Soviet Government has not suppressed the colonial peoples of the Tsarist Empire. On the contrary, it has granted these peoples full self-government within the framework of the U.S.S.R. Every nationality, great or small, has equal political, cultural and economic rights. The Soviet Government and the Great Russians (the most numerous nationality in the U.S.S.R.) have not exploited the labour of the natives of smaller nationalities; on the contrary, they have given them unstinted help to develop their natural resources and to apply the resulting increased wealth to the raising of their general well-being and cultural level.



The Soviet Government, in the short span of twenty-two years, has done infinitely more to raise the general level of the colonial peoples of Tsardom than any imperialist government has done in centuries to raise the general level of their colonial peoples.

We need give but one example—Turkmenia. In Tsarist days the masses of the Turkmenian people were almost landless and terribly poverty-stricken. For a small plot of land, scarcely enough to support his family, if he had used the whole harvest for himself, the Turkmenian peasant had to surrender more than half his harvest, and he had to pay the landlords for every drop of water.

The masses of the population were illiterate, disease was rife and as a people they seemed doomed to die out. How different is the life of the Turkmenians now! Landlordism has been abolished, modern methods of cultivating the soil introduced, systems of irrigation built. As a result, the area under cotton—the most important crop in Turkmenia—is now two and a half times and the yield per acre nearly twice that in 1924; the gross yield of cotton has increased some five and a half times.

The natural resources of Turkmenia have been developed and many new industries established: all this for the benefit of the Turkmenians themselves—not for alien landlords and factory owners.

Before the revolution only 0·7 per cent. of the population covered by the Turkmenian Republic were literate; now 80 per cent. are literate. There are now 1,347 schools of which 1,186 are in the rural areas. There are also four universities with a total of 2,000 students; four teachers' training colleges and thirty-eight technical colleges; eighteen scientific research institutes, etc. Turkmenian literature is now flourishing, as are also the Turkmenian theatre, art, etc. There are four State Turkmenian

theatres, four regional *kolkhoz*<sup>1</sup> theatres, many theatres for children, music schools, concert halls, dramatic schools, etc. All this is not reserved for a favoured few, but is at the disposal of the industrial and agricultural workers of the whole Republic.

The Turkmenian women, formerly most oppressed and backward, are now taking their place as equal citizens side by side with their menfolk. Five Turkmenian women are members of the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R. (the Soviet Parliament); forty-five women are members of the Supreme Council of Turkmenia (the Turkmenian Parliament). Turkmenian women occupy many important State posts.

Large sums of money have been spent on municipal improvements, and the former earth or leaking wooden huts in the villages are being rapidly substituted by modern houses. Parks, clubs, hospitals and clinics, crèches, schools are springing up everywhere and the capital, Ashkhabad, has now become a finely laid-out town of 127,000 inhabitants, with all the attributes of a modern capital town.

Turkmenia is not an exception; the progress there is typical of that made in all the areas inhabited by the former suppressed colonial peoples of the Tsarist Empire.

In 1914 there were many Jamaicas, Kenyas, etc., in Tsarist Russia. There are none in 1940 in Soviet Russia.

How, then, can one explain the proposals, outlined in the following pages, made to the three Baltic states and Finland by the Soviet Government?

The answer is quite simple: they stipulate nothing of an imperialist nature. Under these proposals, no governing class in the Kremlin will draw dividends or profits from under-paid labour in the three Baltic states and Finland.

<sup>1</sup> Collective farms.

No "governor-generals," housed in palatial residences, with retinues and big staffs, will be appointed by Moscow to Tallin, Riga, Kaunas and Helsinki. The Baltic states and Finland will not be controlled from Moscow, they will not be robbed of self-government, their social-economic structure will not be interfered with, their soil will not be confiscated and vested in parasitic alien landlords. What, then, has the Soviet Government to gain from these proposals? Why have they made them? A glance at the map, coupled with a brief consideration of the most important happenings in the Baltic area between the years 1914 and 1920 will readily supply the answer—for compelling strategic reasons.

These four little states are of even greater strategical importance to the U.S.S.R. than the Low Countries are to Great Britain and France. The ports of the eastern Baltic are as vital to the Soviet Union as are Gibraltar, Malta, Alexandria, Aden, Hong-Kong, etc., to the British Empire, and as similar strategic bases are to France, the U.S.A., etc.

Can we imagine for one moment that all the imperialist Powers would or could agree to evacuate their forces from these fortified and important strategic and supply bases and return them to the countries to which they belong geographically or ethnographically? Certainly not. At any rate, we know perfectly well that no responsible politician in Great Britain or France or the U.S.A. to-day advocates their unconditional evacuation. The same applies to the Eastern Baltic strategic bases, both occupied by and desired by the Soviet Union.

It has been argued by critics of the Soviet Government's proposals to the three Baltic states and Finland that if the Soviet Government were granted the right to establish naval and supply bases and aerodromes on the

territory of these states, their independence and sovereignty would be violated.

In all friendliness we would ask these critics whether they have forgotten the terms of the Anglo-Egyptian Treaty of 1936. In Article 8 of that instrument it is laid down that, "in view of the fact that the Suez Canal, whilst being an integral part of Egypt, is a universal means of communication, as also an essential means of communication between the different parts of the British Empire," Great Britain is granted the right "to station forces in Egyptian territory in the vicinity of the Canal, but *"the presence of these forces shall not constitute in any manner an occupation and will in no way prejudice the sovereign rights of Egypt"* (our italics).

The Treaty was ratified unanimously by the House of Commons, November 24, 1936. Sir Archibald Sinclair, the Liberal leader, warmly welcomed this instrument, and Dr. Hugh Dalton, on behalf of the Labour Party, not only hailed the Agreement, but justly claimed that "the Treaty which the Right Hon. Gentleman (Mr. Anthony Eden) recommends to the House this afternoon is substantially Arthur Henderson's 'Treaty' of 1929, which Egypt at that time refused to accept.

It may be asked why the defence of the Baltic states and Finland cannot be left to themselves. The answer strikes one in the face. To-day, as in 1919, they have neither the man-power nor the resources to resist pressure or invasion by a powerful state. It is true that Finland has an area of 135,000 square miles—about three times the area of England—but it is largely a country of forests, swamps and lakes, less than 7 per cent. of its surface is cultivated and its population is only 3,600,000. Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania combined have an area of 65,000 square miles, with a total population of only 5½ millions.



Even combined, these four states could do little to thwart the policy of a big Power.

This is so axiomatic as hardly to require demonstration. However, in case some sceptic asks for proof, it is only necessary to recall what happened between 1914 and 1920. The German High Command marched its troops through the Baltic states to the shores of the Gulf of Finland, took possession of every port and naval base on the Eastern Baltic, occupied the Aaland Islands, landed forces in Finland, threatened Petrograd and menaced northern Russia's last ice-free connecting link with western Europe, the Murmansk-Petrograd Railway.

Again, in 1919, units of the British and French Fleets occupied all the ports and naval bases of these four states, attacked the Red forces on these territories and compelled these toddling republics, much against their will, to make war on Soviet Russia.

These events, which are dealt with at some length in the following pages, could be much more easily repeated to-day—because of the greater mechanisation and speed of all forms of fighting forces—were the Soviet Fleet confined to the eastern area of the Gulf of Finland.

We have little doubt that the facts recorded in the text of this booklet will prove our thesis to the hilt: (a) that Soviet action has been called forth by sheer geographical and strategical necessity; (b) that there is nothing savouring of imperialism in the Soviet Pacts with the three Baltic states, nor in the proposals made to Finland.

It will no doubt be asked: "Whom does the Soviet Union fear? Who dreams of attacking her?" No great nation neglects vital strategic points because at any particular time there is no threatening enemy on the horizon. No Government in Great Britain, France or the

U.S.A. would do anything of the kind; still less can the U.S.S.R. afford to do so.

Ever since the Soviet Union was established, reactionary circles in all the great capitalist countries have been campaigning in one form or another, now in the open, now in secret, for a general crusade against her. Under these circumstances, the Soviets are fully justified in seizing every opportunity to strengthen their strategic position.

## SOVIET RUSSIA, FINLAND AND THE BALTIC STATES

WHAT are the aims of the Soviet Union? What has actuated her policy? Has the U.S.S.R. suddenly turned imperialist? Has she turned her back on Lenin's policy of self-determination for small nationalities? These and kindred questions have been much canvassed in the Press, on the platform and in the legislatures and chancelleries. Here we shall endeavour to answer them at some length.

As usual, it is better to start at the beginning.

From the time when Russia had begun to take shape as a great nation in the middle of the sixteenth century, her most far-sighted and purposeful rulers endeavoured to establish ice-free outlets to the sea, and for this it was necessary to extend their domains to the shores of the Baltic and Black Seas. Without Russian ports on these seas, free and easy access to and communications with western Europe were impossible.

It was a life aim of that ruthless but energetic and far-seeing ruler, Peter the Great (1682-1725), to establish Russia on the shores of the Baltic and Black Seas. Here we must confine ourselves to the struggle for the Baltic seaboard. When in 1700 Peter began the twenty-one-year war with Sweden, the latter country enjoyed hegemony over the Baltic Sea and northern Europe generally; but under the peace treaty signed at Nystad, August 30, 1721, Sweden was forced to cede for ever to Russia Estonia, with Reval and Narva, and Livonia (northern Latvia), with Riga.

Four years later Peter died, leaving his task uncompleted.

That great political genius realised the importance of having access to the open sea if Russia was to extend her social intercourse with the West, and the great significance this would have for the progress of her civilisation.

Catherine the Great continued the work of Peter. After the defeat of the Poles in 1794-5, Russia annexed Lithuania and Courland (southern Latvia), and thus Russia was at last firmly established on the eastern Baltic. Commenting on the achievements of Peter and Catherine, S. F. Platomov, the noted Russian historian, wrote: "His [Peter's] genius and determination enabled him to reach the open sea. This struggle exhausted him and his resources and forced him to leave the completion of the task on the south and south-west to his successors. Catherine took up the fight where Peter left off. She recovered the Russian territories, except Galicia, held by Poland, and extended the Russian frontiers down to the Black and Azov Seas. Peter the Great solved one of the age-old problems of Russian politics and Catherine the other two. Therein lies the importance of the celebrated 'Age of Catherine.' From Catherine's time, Russia enters upon a new era and begins to pursue new objects."

The methods and policies in other respects of these two monarchs do not concern us here, but no impartial student of history can deny that they felt and expressed the urge of a great nation moving forward.

The three Baltic states, Estonia, Latvia (comprising Livonia and Courland) and Lithuania, were by 1795, after nearly a century of struggle, part of the Tsarist Empire, but Finland was still in the possession of Sweden. However, in 1808 and 1809, after much hard fighting, the Russian forces drove the Swedish troops out of Finland, and under the Russian-Swedish Treaty of 1809 Sweden



ceded Finland, including the Aaland Islands, to Russia. From 1809 to 1917, Finland (with the Aaland Islands), Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania with their valuable ports were in the possession of Russia.

At the outbreak of the World War, in August, 1914, the chief Russian naval base in the Baltic was Kronstadt. The Imperial Dockyards were situated at St. Petersburg (Nevsky, New Admiralty and Galerniye Island), Kronstadt, Reval and Libau. In addition to Kronstadt, the following ports were fortified: Viborg, Hangö and Sveaborg in Finland; Reval and Baltiski in Estonia; Windau, Libau, Riga and Dunamünde in Latvia.

Nature was very unkind to Russia in the Baltic. Her only two all-the-year round ice-free ports were Windau and Libau. The Gulf of Finland, in which St. Petersburg, Kronstadt, Viborg and Sveaborg were situated, was closed by ice for from four to five months every winter. As regards Reval and Riga, they are usually, but by no means always, open to navigation throughout the winter. As just mentioned, Windau and Libau were the only two ports open to navigation throughout the winter months.

In 1914, Russia, including all her coasts, had proportionately a very much shorter ice-free seaboard than any other Great Power on the planet. That was not all. Her exits from the Baltic and Black Seas could with relative ease, as in fact they were in the 1914-18 War, be closed against her by an enemy or combination of enemies who had at their disposal a powerful fleet.

Before proceeding further, a word is necessary here respecting the "Baltic Barons" or "German Balts," as they have been variously designated. They were the descendents of German merchant-colonists who first began to establish themselves in these provinces as far back as the year 1200, bringing with them religion, a

military organisation and the blessings of Pope and Emperor. With the aid of their military organisation, they established themselves as feudal landlords and merchants, and, despite changes in the sovereignty of these provinces, they were able to hold fast to their possessions throughout the centuries. Under Swedish King and Russian Tsar, they enjoyed a large measure of autonomy. They treated the natives as hewers of wood and drawers of water and exploited them so mercilessly that the latter hated them even more than they did the Russian overlords. The Swedish and Russian Governments did not interfere much with the German colonists—German was the official language up to the third quarter of the nineteenth century—and the colonists in their turn were loyal to King and Tsar, whoever happened to be in the saddle. It is recorded that when the Teutonic missionaries converted the natives to Christianity and baptised them, the latter at the first opportunity jumped into the nearest river "to wash off" the holy water.

In the book, *The Baltic States*, prepared by the Information Department of the Royal Institute for International Affairs, the activities of the Order of the Teutonic Knights in the greater part of the territories now covered by Estonia and Latvia are summed up in the following succinct but pretty accurate manner: "These orders colonised the territory, converted the inhabitants to Christianity and made them serfs. Their lineal descendants, the Baltic Barons, maintained their position as the land-owning class until recent times, in spite of the fact that the territory eventually passed into the hands of Sweden and Poland, and finally into those of Russia."

We shall return to this subject in later pages.

### THE WORLD WAR (1914-18), THE BALTIC STATES AND FINLAND

SOON after the outbreak of the World War in August, 1914, the German Navy being far superior to the then Russian Navy, the Baltic Sea was largely transformed into a German lake. Northern Russia had only one port left which was both ice-free and open to traffic with Europe, viz. Murmansk on the Arctic.

On land, after its crushing defeat at Tannenberg (August 23-30, 1914), the Russian Army retreated through Lithuania, followed by the victorious Germans, who, in the winter of 1914-15, occupied half of that province. In the course of September, 1915, the Germans occupied Vilna and by the end of that month the German line (as far as the Baltic states were concerned) ran from a point some forty kilometres west of Riga, considerably east of Mitau and Vilna and then south to Czernowitz. The port of Riga, as well as Livonia, Estonia and Finland were still in Russian hands. Little happened on this part of the battle front until September 1, 1917, when the German Army again took the initiative, crossed the Dvina at Uxkull, south-east of Riga, and three days later occupied that port. This was a terrible blow to the Russian defence, because, among other things, it opened the road to the capital. General Denikin commented: "We lost the rich industrial town of Riga, with all its military structures and supplies; more important still, we lost a safe defensive line, the abandonment of which placed both the Dvina Front and the way to Petrograd under a constant threat" (*The Russian Turmoil*, p. 314. Our italics).

Meanwhile the German fleet had not been idle. The

important port of Libau had been occupied, and this was used as a base to prepare an attack on the islands of Ösel and Dagö. The attack was launched by naval and military forces on October 17, 1917, and within a week the Germans were in complete control of the two islands. The occupation of these islands not only strengthened German mastery in the Baltic Sea; it did more; it still further endangered Petrograd. General Ludendorff confesses in his *Memories*: "The blow was aimed at Petrograd . . . and was bound to make an impression there."

After these episodes, this front remained stationary until after the November (1917) Revolution and the Russian-German peace negotiations at Brest-Litovsk.

It is outside our province to discuss here the "November Revolution" and the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, except in so far as they affect the relationship of the Baltic states to Russia.

At the beginning of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations, only Lithuania, Courland and the Islands of Ösel and Dagö were in German occupation. The Soviet representatives declared their readiness to apply the principle of self-determination to the Baltic states, but, of course, proposed that the German army of occupation should withdraw to their pre-War frontiers. This the Germans emphatically refused to do. They had other aims. The Germans were in such a strong position *vis-à-vis* Soviet Russia that they could afford to insist on their own terms. They wanted to annex Lithuania and Courland, but were willing to leave Estonia and Livonia in Russian occupation.

The German proposals were turned down by the Soviet Government because they violated the principle of self-determination. Finally, the Soviet Government declared that the war was over, but refused to sign a peace treaty.



The Soviet Government hoped, no doubt, that in this way the position would remain static for a time and peace negotiations with Germany could be resumed at a later date. But they were mistaken. The Soviet-German armistice was violated by the German Government on February 18, 1918, when its armed forces began a general advance into Russian territory from Riga as far south as Lutsk (230 miles west of Kiev). The Russian Army was in no condition to continue the war, and the Soviet Government on the following day wirelessly Berlin expressing its willingness to accept the German peace terms. However, when the Soviet and German plenipotentiaries again met at Brest-Litovsk on February 28, 1918, the Germans presented much stiffer terms than those previously offered. They included the evacuation and relinquishment of all Russian claims to the Baltic provinces. These terms were finally accepted and the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed on March 3, 1918.

What particularly interests us here is the fact that during the whole period of the Brest-Litovsk negotiations there was a sharp division of opinion within the ranks of the German Government, between the soldiers and the civilians, respecting the advisability of separating the Baltic provinces from Russia. The soldiers were in favour, the civilians against. At a conference held at Kruezbach, under the presidency of the Kaiser, the matter was fully discussed. General Hoffman put the case for the Supreme Command, urging that the Russians should be cleared out of the Baltic states. Foreign Minister Baron von Kühlmann strongly opposed. He feared the bad effects abroad and he did not want unnecessarily to antagonise and humiliate Russia. He turned to Hindenburg and asked: "Why do you particularly want the territories?"

Grim old Hindenburg retorted: "I need them for the manœuvring of my left wing in the next war." Even that did not settle the matter. The Kaiser vacillated between the two sides and General Ludendorff himself thought that these terms were extremely harsh on Russia. He recorded in his *Memories*: "Lithuania and Courland are not of vital importance to Russia. The loss of Estonia and Livonia would be painful; but in this district Russia was to receive every conceivable concession." After the signature of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the German forces completed their occupation of the Baltic states and advanced as far eastward as Narva (on the Gulf of Finland), Pskov, Potalsk, Orsla and Mohilev.

Meanwhile, events in Finland had been moving rapidly. Throughout the War relations between certain influential circles in Finland and the German Government had been very close and some thousands of Finns had fought with the German forces against the Allied armies. However, it was the "November Revolution" which brought freedom and independence to Finland. The Finnish House of Representatives, on December 6, 1917, declared Finland an independent and sovereign state, and this was formally recognised by the Soviet Government on December 31, 1917. For some months afterwards the conditions of the Russian civil war were paralleled in Finland, but with a different final result. In Russia the "Whites," despite the aid given them by the Allied Governments, were defeated; in Finland, the "Whites," as a consequence of the aid given them by the German Government, won.

General Ludendorff recorded in his *Memories*: "Finland had risen and required help; arms alone were not enough." He related that German forces occupied the Åland Islands, landed at Hangö, joined hands with Mannerheim's Finnish White Guards, occupied Viborg and

finally defeated the Finnish Red Guards. To quote his own words: "Finland was thus liberated." No mention was made by Ludendorff of the cold-blooded massacre of the Red Guards after the triumph of the "Whites." However, *The Times* of February 11, 1919, recorded: "Out of about 80,000 Red prisoners taken at the end of April or subsequently arrested, more than 30,000 men and women are dead."

As already mentioned on a previous page, German forces, after the conclusion of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, had occupied Narva, on the Estonian shore of the Gulf of Finland; and, as just mentioned, Viborg on the Finnish shore of the Gulf had been occupied by the Finnish White Guards. Commenting on the occupation of these bases, Ludendorff stated: "*We now hold positions at Viborg and Narva which would at any time enable us to advance on Petrograd, in order to overthrow the Bolshevik Government or prevent the English from reaching there from Murmansk.*" From Finland, moreover, the Murmansk Railway was flanked along its whole length, so that England could not undertake any serious attempt on Petrograd. The English expedition which had occupied the Murman Coast was firmly held there" (*My War Memories*, p. 628. Our italics).

As far as Russian access to the Baltic was concerned, the work of several centuries of sustained efforts and bloody wars had been undone for the time being practically overnight. Of all the Baltic ports, Petrograd alone, which is blocked by ice for from four to five months in the winter, was left to Russia, a fact which was painfully brought home to the Russian people in the following year.

The moral of what we have so far recorded will, we think, be quite clear to our readers, i.e. what the Kaiser's

military and naval forces were able to achieve during the 1914-18 World War against the Baltic states and Finland could have been paralleled by present-day Germany in the course of a few days prior to September-October, 1939, had these states had to rely on their own resources. Further, these four states would obviously constitute an admirable jumping-off ground for an attack on Leningrad and the Soviet Union.

We would only add another remark here, viz. everyone conversant with the facts realised that any future Russian Government, irrespective of its colour, would be bound, sooner or later, for its own protection, to recover the important strategic points on the eastern Baltic seaboard. The only questions were when and how.

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#### THE ALLIED GOVERNMENTS, THE BALTIC STATES AND FINLAND

UNDER the terms of the Treaty of Versailles, Germany pledged herself to withdraw from all conquered territory, including the Baltic states. At the conclusion of the World War, British and French naval forces were despatched to the Baltic, and Rear-Admiral Walter Cowan took over the command of the British forces there in January, 1919. His report, published as a supplement to the *London Gazette*, makes interesting reading to-day. But before proceeding to a consideration of this document, it is necessary to recall a very pertinent fact. Under the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, the Red Fleet in the Baltic was confined to the Bay of Kronstadt, which in the spring of 1919, as usual, was blocked by ice, and therefore the Soviet Fleet



could not reach any of the other Baltic ports, thus giving the British and French naval units a completely free hand in this area.

The aims of the British-French Fleets were: (a) to prevent the Red Fleet from leaving the Bay of Kronstadt; (b) to aid the anti-Soviet forces in the Baltic states and Finland; (c) to induce, for the time being, the German forces in these states to assist the anti-Soviet forces; (d) to insist that the German Reich forces returned to Germany when they had served the purposes of the Allied Governments. In January, 1919, the British naval base was Libau.

Rear-Admiral Cowan reported:

"When I arrived the German situation was as follows: German troops were nominally in occupation of Latvia, with headquarters at Libau.

"The Bolsheviks were in Riga, and gradually advancing south and west.

"The Bolsheviks had by the middle of February advanced so far as Windau, and were also within forty miles from Libau from the westward.

"I therefore, in *Caledon* (Commander Henry S. M. Harrison-Wallace, R.N.), shelled them out of Windau, and made what preparations I could to evacuate the refugees from Libau, as I did not consider an indiscriminate shelling of the town in the event of its occupation by the Bolsheviks would be advisable if no troops were available to land for its reoccupation.

"Shortly after this (at the end of February), large German reinforcements began to arrive by sea, and General-Major Graf von der Goltz assumed command at Libau, and very soon afterwards stabilised the situation, and drove the Bolsheviks well east again—and this, so far, was satisfactory" (Fifth Supplement to the *London Gazette*, April 6, 1920).

In May, 1919, the Admiral sailed to the Gulf of Finland, established his base at Reval, kept a keen watch on the Red Fleet in the Gulf, helped the Estonian left flank from the sea. To quote his own words: "From then onwards I maintained a watch on the Bay, whilst the Estonians were constantly in contact with the Bolshevik troops, bombarding and pushing forward here and there, and landing more men, whilst relieving those who needed refit."

In June, Admiral Cowan moved his base to Biorko in Finland and asked the Finns for certain assistance "in the way of patrols and accommodation on shore for aircraft, which assistance was at once agreed to by them."

When in October, 1919, Yudenitch launched his attack for the capture of Petrograd, the British Fleet did "all that could be done . . . in the way of shelling positions and covering the advance."

When the winter set in and ice formed on the Gulf of Finland, the British Fleet withdrew. The Admiral concluded thus: "My aim was throughout the year to prevent any Bolshevik warships breaking out into the Gulf of Finland—and the ice has now relieved me of this responsibility—and also to frustrate by every means the most evident design of the Germans to overrun and dominate the Baltic provinces and then to advance on Petrograd, and their repulse from both Riga and Libau in October and November by the Lettish troops under cover of the bombardment of our ships has, I think, put an end to this also, and all German troops were back into Prussia by 15th December."

Meanwhile, the fate of the three Baltic states was being discussed at the Peace Conference in Paris between the representatives of the Allied Governments and the Tsarist generals. All were hostile, Allies and Tsarists, to the separation of these three states from Russia.

The Allied Governments (Great Britain, France, U.S.A., Italy and Japan), on May 26, 1919, sent a Note to Admiral Koltchak stating that they were prepared to render him assistance, provided that he gave them satisfactory assurances on a number of questions, including the Baltic states. Respecting these, Koltchak replied:

"We are fully disposed at once to prepare for the solution of the questions concerning the fate of the national groups in Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and of the Caucasian and Transcaspian countries, and we have every reason to believe that a prompt settlement will be made, seeing that the Government is assuring, as from the present time, the autonomy of the various nationalities. It goes without saying that the limits and conditions of these autonomous institutions will be settled separately as regards each of the nationalities concerned."

There is no mention here of independent sovereignty. Further, the Admiral's representatives in Paris made it daylight clear that Koltchak's reply meant that these states would be granted a certain measure, but nothing more, of local autonomy. Yet the Allied Governments regarded this answer as satisfactory. They replied immediately:

"The Allied and Associated Powers wish to acknowledge receipt of Admiral Koltchak's reply to their note of 26 May. They welcome the tone of that reply, which seems to them to be in substantial agreement with the propositions which they had made, and to contain satisfactory assurances for the freedom, self-government and peace of the Russian people and their neighbours. They are, therefore, willing to extend to Admiral Koltchak and his associates the support set forth in their original letter."

*The Times* regarded Koltchak's attitude towards the Baltic states as quite reasonable. In a leading article, it declared:

"They [the Baltic border states] cannot stand by themselves absolutely independent and sovereign states, and the Allies and associates would be physically unable to maintain them as such states" (November 5, 1919).

At this time the three small Baltic states would have been only too pleased to have made peace with the Soviets, but they were bullied and badgered by the Allied Governments into continuing the war against Moscow.

Indeed, on September 30, 1919, the Baltic states held a conference at which they decided to open peace negotiations with Soviet Russia. The Allies protested against this move, and when the Baltic states persisted in their peace policy, the former, on October 2, 1919, imposed a blockade of the three Baltic republics. Three days later Finland joined in the blockade of Soviet Russia. Finally the Baltic states had no alternative but to accede to the wishes of the Allies.

The head of the British Military Mission to the Baltic, General Sir Hubert Gough, shortly after his return home, was so disgusted with the Allied Governments' policy that, in a letter to the Press in January, 1920, he declared:

"In spite of the disclaimers of various members of the Government, there is little doubt that Allied pressure has been exerted upon the Baltic states generally, and upon the Estonians in particular, to induce them to continue the war against the Bolsheviks. The policy which has been adopted by the Allies towards Estonia must be understood to apply in a more or less equal



degree towards all the Baltic states, not excluding Poland."

It is significant that, although Estonia, Lithuania and Latvia signed peace with and were recognised *de jure* by the Soviet Government in February, July and August, 1920, respectively, Estonia and Latvia were not recognised by the Allied Conference till January, 1921, and Lithuania not till December, 1922, i.e. until after General Wrangel, the last "White hope" had been driven into the Black Sea. The Allies up till that time had been hoping that the Tsarists would triumph, and they realised that one of the first acts of a "White" Government would be to invade and re-annex the Baltic states, an act which London, Paris, Rome, Washington and Tokyo would have regarded as not only reasonable, but desirable. Their *de jure* recognition of the Baltic states was actuated, not by regard for these small states, but was solely directed against the Soviets.

At that time, powerful political and social circles in this country and France, as well as the ex-Tsarist princes, admirals, generals and statesmen who had fled to London and Paris, were still hoping that somehow, some day, somewhere, something would happen to rekindle the civil war in Russia and that then the Baltic states would constitute a useful base for an attack on Soviet Russia. It was never doubted that the return of a "White" Government would mean the immediate re-annexation of the Baltic states to Russia.

Now to treat of the Aaland Archipelago. These islands, as a glance at the map will show, are of immense strategical importance. They have been aptly designated the "Malta of the Baltic." They dominate the entrance to the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Bothnia. For centuries

they belonged to Sweden, but, as mentioned on a previous page, they were, in 1809, ceded to Russia, and remained in Russian possession until after the "November (1917) Revolution."

The Russians, who, of course, realised the strategic importance of the islands, erected a fortress there, "Bomarsund," which was bombarded during the Crimean War by the British and French Fleets. During the peace negotiations in Paris in 1856 which ended the Crimean War, Sweden was successful in getting a convention attached to the Peace Treaty under which Russia pledged herself to demilitarise the islands. The aim of Britain and France in agreeing was to weaken Russia. However, London and Paris registered no protest when Russia re-fortified the islands during the 1914-18 World War. What happened immediately after the "November Revolution" has thus been recorded in *The Times*:

"When, in 1917, Finland proclaimed her independence, the 23,000 Aalanders, who are to more than 97 per cent. Swedish-speaking, expressed their desire to be reunited with Sweden. Finland, however, would not agree, and an acrimonious dispute followed between the two countries. Thereupon Great Britain brought the question before the Council of the League of Nations. In 1921 the Council decided the question of suzerainty in favour of Finland, but decreed that the Aalanders should enjoy a very extensive autonomy. The demilitarisation of the islands was also reaffirmed and strengthened. A convention, signed by all the Baltic countries except the Soviet Union, as well as by France, the British Empire and Italy, prohibited any military, naval or air establishments in the archipelago, including the storage there of military supplies. Finland was granted only the right, in case of danger of attack against the islands, of taking certain defensive measures

in the zone to check and repulse an aggressor until such time as the League of Nations and the signatory Powers could intervene to enforce respect for the neutrality of the islands" (January 5, 1939).

It will be noticed that the Soviet Union, which was vitally concerned, was excluded from the list of signatories of this instrument. The following is a graphic description of the strategic importance of these islands:

"The Aaland Islands (natives pronounce it Awland) lie like a great pair of scissors across the Baltic lifelines of four nations.

"Clip!—and the iron and steel trade from Sweden is lost to Germany.

"Clip!—and the Russian Fleet is cooped in the Finnish Gulf.

"Clip!—and Finland is locked in the Arctic.

"To-day the scissors are wide open because the islands are unfortified. To-morrow, strewn with mines and crowned with sixteen-inch guns, they could be made into a Singapore of the north.

"The Aalands are strung for three-quarters of the way across the straits between Sweden and Finland. There are 6,854 of them, mostly granite rocks, and only eighty-eight are inhabited. But the main island, which is as big as all the rest put together, contains a harbour in which the whole Red Navy could nestle in comfort and security" (*Daily Express*, November 6, 1939).

We shall return later to this subject.

## FURTHER DEVELOPMENTS IN THE BALTIC STATES

As already mentioned, the Soviet Union had concluded peace with and recognised *de jure* the Lithuanian Republic in the Soviet-Lithuanian Peace Treaty of July 12, 1920, within definite frontiers. The Polish Government, however, almost from the first, cast covetous eyes on some of the fairest provinces of the new Republic. Like a panther, Polish forces, in October, 1920, sprang upon and occupied Lithuania's old capital, Vilna, and the Vilna districts. This episode is thus chronicled in *The Nations of To-day*, by Mr. John Buchan (the late Lord Tweedsmuir):

"In August, 1920, after the Poles had swept back the Russian hosts from Warsaw, they began a series of conflicts with the Lithuanians in the Seiny-Suvalki area. An attempt at compromise was made by the Conference at Kalvarija; but, before the ink was dry upon the Convention, the Poles had treacherously disregarded it and immobilised the main body of the Lithuanian Army by seizing the Olita-Orani Railway. Then followed in October the Zeligowski adventure, a scandalous *coup de force*, not officially recognised by the Polish Government, but unofficially aided and abetted by it, whereby some so-called White Russians seized the city of Vilna. The Lithuanian Government had fortunately returned in safety to its old capital at Kovno in the nick of time. Its successors, under the name of the Government of Central Lithuania, have remained in Vilna ever since, and have so far signalised their reign by maladministration of an almost Mediæval character. Indeed, if any further proof were needed of the unpopularity of Polish domination, the elaborate precautions and practical



coercion that were directed to the consummation of the farcical elections of January 8, 1922, would be sufficient evidence to any thinking man."

The matter came before the League of Nations in 1921 and the Conference of Ambassadors in 1923. At that time, both these bodies were in the main controlled by London and Paris. The Conference, despite the vehement protests of the Lithuanians, recognised the Polish annexation. Polish landlords were the niggers in the woodpile. Buchan explained:

"Although the new boundaries are not yet (August, 1923) completely determined, it is obvious that this decision has involved a large acquisition of Lithuanian territory by Poland, whereby she has secured, not only Vilna, but Grodno, in addition to many thousand square miles of country, most of the estates in which are occupied and cultivated by Lithuanians, but are largely owned by Polish landlords. So much for 'self-determination.'"

It is significant to recall that, although the Allied Governments tamely accepted the Polish seizure of Lithuanian territory; as far back as February 24, 1920, they had warned Moscow that if "Soviet Russia attacks them [the Baltic states] inside their legitimate frontiers the Allies will give them [the Baltic states] every possible support."<sup>1</sup> What was sauce for the Polish capitalist landlord goose was not sauce for the Soviet proletarian gander.

We have already referred to the "Baltic Barons": they were badly hit by the "November Revolution" and its repercussions in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. To quote the Riga correspondent of *The Times*:

<sup>1</sup> From a statement issued by the Supreme Council sitting in London, February 24, 1920.

"The Baltic-German landlords were dispossessed. . . . The Agrarian Reform Law of September, 1920, granted every Latvian citizen land up to 54 acres, provided he was able to cultivate it. All large estates became part of the State Land Fund. A Latvian citizen, though of German stock—a few were of Polish and of Russian origin—might retain up to 247 acres of the estate he had formerly owned" (October 14, 1939).

What applied to Latvia applied also more or less to Estonia and Lithuania.

As recorded, the Soviet Union had recognised *de jure* Finland and the three Baltic states, but naturally, for strategical and geographical reasons, she could not treat her own relationship to these states lightly, nor could she be indifferent to their relations with other countries. Finland and the three Baltic states, as has been said by statesmen and strategists on innumerable occasions, are to Russia, irrespective of its form of government, what the Low Countries are to Britain and France; we would add, they are even more so.

The Soviet Government concluded pacts of non-aggression and pacific settlements of disputes with Lithuania in 1926, with Latvia, Estonia and Finland in 1932. The pacts were not military alliances. They contained no clauses for mutual military aid. Their purpose was essentially the preservation of peace by a mutual undertaking to abstain from any aggressive action against one another, including acts which violated the territorial integrity or political independence of either party; they usually also contained a clause whereby each contracting party agreed not to participate in treaties hostile to the other. Further, they provided for conciliation machinery for the settlement of disputes which might arise between the contracting parties.

The U.S.S.R., on April 4, 1934, signed a protocol with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania prolonging these pacts for ten years, and a similar pact was signed with Finland on May 5, 1934.

The Soviet Government approached the German Government in March, 1934, with a proposition that both Governments should guarantee the integrity and independence of the Baltic states. This proposal was declined by Berlin on the plea that, "since the independence and integrity of the Baltic states are, in the opinion of the German Government, in no way threatened, it sees no reason whatever for the conclusion with the Soviet Government of any special treaty for the protection of these states."

The Soviet Government had no alternative but to acquiesce in this refusal. M. Litvinov, in acknowledging the German rejection, answered: "There can be no doubt whatever that the adoption of the Soviet proposition could not be interpreted otherwise than as a serious strengthening of peace in eastern Europe. It is also impossible to deny that it would have strengthened the feeling of security of the Baltic states, who, it goes without saying, would have been previously informed and who would undoubtedly have regarded the proposition most favourably."

As already mentioned, Lithuania refused to acknowledge the Polish annexation of the Vilna town and district. She declined to establish diplomatic relations with Poland and to open the frontier between the two countries. As a consequence, the frontier on both sides was protected by armed guards, a situation which sooner or later was fairly certain to lead to incidents.

A serious clash took place between the frontier guards on March 11, 1938, in the course of which a Polish soldier

was killed. Warsaw was immediately out for blood. The Polish Government sent a forty-eight hours' ultimatum to the Lithuanian Government with the following demands, as cabled from Kaunas by the *Daily Telegraph's* special correspondent:

"Lithuania must unconditionally open diplomatic relations immediately.

"She must not seek to evade Poland's terms by attempting to prolong the negotiations.

"Lithuania must accept Poland's ultimatum in the form in which it is submitted.

"She must appoint a Minister in Warsaw before March 31.

"She must open land, water and air communications and establish telephone, telegraph and postal facilities immediately" (March 19, 1938).

The report continued: "If these orders are not complied with, Poland declares she will act as she sees fit to protect her interests. To-day a proclamation urged the inhabitants to keep calm. It closed with the words: 'Our will is firm and we stand united.'"

On the same day the *Daily Telegraph's* Vilna correspondent cabled:

"Marshal Smigly-Rydz, head of the Polish Army, arrived here to-day with a large retinue of staff officers.

"Their arrival was the signal for a mass demonstration in the main square of Vilna. Delegates from the meeting afterwards handed to Marshal Smigly-Rydz a resolution calling on him to 'abolish Lithuania.'

"Marshal Smigly-Rydz replied that Poland's interests would be safeguarded.

"*There will be great rejoicing throughout Poland tomorrow if the answer of the Lithuanian Government is unfavourable*" (March 19, 1938. Our italics).



Little Lithuania, which was much weaker *vis-à-vis* Poland than the latter was *vis-à-vis* Germany, had no alternative but to bow before her much more powerful neighbour. Cabling from Warsaw on the evening of March 19, 1938, regarding the future intentions of Poland, the correspondent of the *Observer* stated:

"The Polish Government, by their present action, aim at obtaining the following main points:

"Firstly, a non-aggression pact with Lithuania for twenty years.

"Second, Lithuania's consent to cease all military and closer diplomatic co-operation with Soviet Russia.

"Third, complete autonomy for about 200,000 Poles living in Lithuania.

"Fourth, close co-operation between the General Staffs of both countries.

"Fifth, free access to Lithuania's Baltic ports, with special trading facilities on the Niemen River and Lithuania's ports, Memel and Palanga" (March 20, 1938).

What part did London play? Did it advise Warsaw to be moderate? The same cable continued:

"Although in responsible Polish circles the peace is primarily attributed to the firm stand of the Polish Government, nevertheless, gratitude is felt towards Lord Halifax and the British Government for their friendly attitude in the whole affair, and in particular for the persuasive words Lord Halifax is reported to have used with the Lithuanian Minister in London, advising his Government to come to terms with Poland."

Poland rejoiced. The report continued: "All Poland is celebrating the peace and the happy avoidance of bloodshed which was certain to have followed if Lithuania had rejected the Polish terms." But Lithuania mourned:

"To-day Lithuanians in the capital look downcast, and their sturdy troops march with sullen faces. In the country districts young peasants are demonstrating, furious that their Vilna is lost to them finally" (*News Chronicle*, March 21, 1938, from its Kovno correspondent).

Actually, however, Poland by no means gained all she demanded from Lithuania, and for this Lithuania had the U.S.S.R. to thank. When the Polish army mobilised for action against Lithuania, Litvinov uttered a salutary warning to the Polish Foreign Minister regarding the effect of Polish military action against Lithuania would have on Soviet policy; on the other hand, the U.S.S.R. counselled Lithuania to give in on the question of the restoration of diplomatic relations with Poland, and this was indeed the one substantial point which Poland gained—a point for which obviously it was not worth Lithuania's while to risk war with Poland.

The next disturbing event in the Baltic arose in the spring of 1939 in connection with Lithuania's main port, Memel. Memel had formed part of the German Empire, had been detached from Germany under the Treaty of Versailles, and was finally ceded to Lithuania under the Memel Statute of 1923, of which Great Britain, France, Italy and Japan were signatories. The inhabitants were overwhelmingly German, and in March, 1939, Berlin peremptorily demanded the return of the Memel territory—about 1,000 square miles, with a population of 150,000—to the Reich. In the early hours of March 22, 1939, the Lithuanian Government bowed to the German ultimatum.

In the course of an official declaration, the Lithuanian Government pitifully remarked: "According to Article XV of the Convention, sovereignty over the Memel territory, as well as the exercise of rights of sovereignty over the territory, could not be relinquished without the consent

of the signatories, Great Britain, Japan, Italy and France" (*Daily Telegraph*, March 22, 1939).

Legally the statement was quite accurate, but by this date Nazi Germany knew that Italy and Japan would endorse what she had done, and as for Britain and France . . .

The Lithuanian Parliament ratified the "Agreement" with Germany, March 22, 1939, and on the following day Nazi troops entered the district and the administration passed into German hands.

How could the German re-annexation of Memel affect the U.S.S.R. and German-Soviet relations? The *Daily Telegraph's* correspondent cabled from Memel a week later:

"Germany's intention of making Memel a heavily armed fortress and a naval base for the domination of the Baltic Sea is revealed in a report in the *Danziger Vorposten*, the Danzig Nazi organ.

"According to the Danzig report, the Memel harbour is now occupied by the U-boat flotilla *Weddingen*, which consists of 12 vessels when at full strength, the U-boat tender *Donau*, 3,950 tons, and torpedo-boat destroyer T.23. Further warships are expected to arrive in Memel shortly" (March 30, 1939).

The *Danziger Vorposten* report concluded: "*The extension of Memel to be one of the strongest fortresses in the Baltic is already in progress*" (our italics).

The *Daily Telegraph's* correspondent continued: "In the event of hostilities involving Germany and Russia, Memel could be used as a base for U-boats, which could prey, not only upon Russian war vessels cruising in the Baltic, but also upon any convoy merchant vessels proceeding to or from Russian, Swedish, Estonian and Latvian ports."

We must now turn to the negotiations which were proceeding between the British, French and Soviet Governments for a pact of mutual assistance coupled with a military convention, negotiations in which the subject of the Baltic played an outstanding rôle.

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#### THE ANGLO-FRENCH-SOVIET NEGOTIATIONS

It is outside the scope of this booklet to deal exhaustively with the negotiations which took place between the British, French and Soviet Governments between April 15 and August 26, 1939. We shall treat of these proceedings only in so far as they affect the Baltic states and Finland.

On April 15, 1939, the British and French diplomatic representatives invited the Soviet Government to issue a unilateral declaration guaranteeing Poland and Rumania, two states which had already been guaranteed by London and Paris without any prior consultation with Moscow.

The Soviet Government took the matter up promptly. Two days later it replied proposing a defensive alliance of Britain, France and the U.S.S.R., coupled with a military convention guaranteeing all the states from the Baltic to the Black Sea. It is not open to doubt that, had the Soviet proposition been accepted, Europe would not have been convulsed by war. The energetic statesmen of London and Paris slept (that is the apposite word!) on the Soviet proposal for three weeks and then replied (May 9, 1939) reiterating their original proposal.

Several meetings were held between the later date and July 25, 1939 (when Britain and France agreed to send a military delegation to Moscow), but the proposals put



forward on behalf of London and Paris respecting indirect aggression in the Baltic states were regarded by Moscow as inadequate.

Why was it that the Soviet Government laid so much stress on safeguarding against indirect aggression? The reasons are clear for all to read, both in the past history of the relations of the Baltic states and Finland with Soviet Russia, and in the internal situation of these states, as well as in the international situation generally in recent years.

We have already seen in earlier pages how the Western Powers, soon after the coming to power of the Soviet Government, had exerted both direct and indirect pressure on the border states of Soviet Russia, forcing them into war against her. As for the internal situation of the Baltic states, it is well known that in Latvia and Lithuania, in particular, semi-fascist governments were in power. Nazi propaganda and activities were very strong in all four states and, in addition, the German element, as represented by the Baltic barons, merchants, professional men, etc., furnished excellent soil for stirring up a Nazi *Putsch* which would have the effect of subjugating these states, making of them Nazi provinces in all but name. We have by now become familiar with this technique followed by the Reich in Austria, Czechoslovakia, etc., whereby a political offensive paved the way, not only for the political and economic subjection of these countries, but also for a military occupation of their territory.

It is true that Finland and the three Baltic states, not trusting the British and French Governments, and terrified at the danger of a lightning swoop on their ports and cities by the quick-hitting armed forces of Germany, and quite incapable of adequate self-defence, declared that they did not wish to be guaranteed.

It is very significant that well-informed publicists were

not deceived by surface appearances. They realised that the attitude of the Soviets was reasonable. They understood that Finland and the Baltic states were too terrified to express their real sentiments. They recognised that the French and British Governments were exploiting the "unwillingness" of the Baltic states to be guaranteed as a convenient excuse to bring the negotiations with Moscow to naught.

Mr. W. Gottlieb, the London correspondent of Latvian and Lithuanian newspapers, in a featured article in the *Daily Telegraph* (May 2, 1939), stated:

"Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia have long realised that the establishment of an exclusive superiority by any Power in their regions might become a deadly threat to their independence. But, limited in resources, with wide-open frontiers and coasts, they never felt able to withstand an enemy single-handed, and therefore supported all League action, even at the risk of being drawn into the conflicts of other nations.

"They knew their territories figured as German on Nazi maps and that every move in favour of any state which Berlin chose to regard as unfriendly might lead to intervention."

He pointed out, further, that after Memel had been annexed by Germany, informal talks took place between Moscow, on the one hand, and Estonia and Latvia, on the other. Should Germany push further into the Baltic, said Mr. Gottlieb, the U.S.S.R. could not "maintain the rôle of a complacent observer, but will have to defend the states which are her natural bulwark. Officially Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania profess not to be afraid of Germany. Yet every responsible person feels that if danger comes, it will come from Germany. After Czechoslovakia,

a feeling of pessimism seized the Baltic countries, and after Munich all three felt they were left alone. They had to re-orientate their policy. And this meant a tendency to come to terms with Berlin."

The Right Hon. A. Duff Cooper, M.P., in the *Evening Standard*, June 13, 1939, referring to the difficulties in the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations, wrote:

"It appears that the Baltic states constitute the difficulty. These states form the frontier of Russia. If they are attacked, the integrity of Russia is in danger, and Russia wishes to be assured that her allies will come to her assistance.

"The Baltic states—like rabbits in the presence of a boa constrictor who has promised not to eat them—assure us in rather shaky voices that they feel quite safe and do not desire to be given any guarantee. The Prime Minister asserts that it is obviously impossible to guarantee a state against its will. Such an assertion sounds at first convincing, but does it bear closer examination?"

After pointing out that these states were to the U.S.S.R. what Belgium is to Britain, and that whatever Belgium might say, Britain would go to war in the event of her being likely to fall into the hands of a Great Power, Mr. Duff Cooper concluded: "Let us be realistic and face facts. We guarantee the frontiers of a country, not out of love for its inhabitants, but out of consideration of our own security. If Russia considers that the integrity of the Baltic states is essential to her security, we cannot blame her, and if we are asking her to undertake to assist us in the case of emergency we cannot refuse to give her a reciprocal undertaking."

Vice-Admiral Osborne (former Director of the British

Naval Intelligence), in a lengthy article in the *News Chronicle*, June 27, 1939, wrote:

"In a war between Germany and Poland, there would be no great strategic need for Germany to operate through the Baltic states, but once Russia was involved it would be very much to Germany's advantage to seize Riga, Tallinn and the islands of Ösel and Dagö, and so have a naval stranglehold on her powerful enemy."

He continued: "It is this, and the commercial penetration which might prepare the way for it, that Russia fears, and it is this which makes the position of the Baltic states precarious, despite the non-aggression treaties<sup>1</sup> just signed."

M. Yvon Delbos (French Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Cabinet of M. Blum), in the *Forum*, July 8, 1939, dealing with the stumbling block in the British-French-Soviet negotiations, wrote:

"But the Baltic problem remains. Since the Baltic States are for Russia what Holland, Belgium and Switzerland are for England and France, the Soviet leaders, in virtue of the principle of equality and reciprocity, demand for the former the same guarantees as those accorded to the latter. To which the British Press and probably the British Government have replied that such equality is provided for in the Franco-British draft."

Were Soviet doubts justifiable? He continued:

"To this it is objected that, although reciprocity may exist in theory, this is not the case in fact. The reason invoked is that it is well known that the three little western states would resist and ask for help if attacked and that therefore the agreement would be effective in

<sup>1</sup> The writer was referring to non-aggression treaties between the Baltic states and Germany.



this sector; but that it is possible, if not probable, that the Baltic states, terrorised and weakened, would allow themselves to be invaded without saying a word and that the agreement would thus be ineffective in the east."

M. Delbos summed up: "This is the whole difficulty. London is disinclined to guarantee states in spite of themselves. Russia, however, affirms that her own security is linked up with the independence of these states, and the view is expressed that if Germany, even with the deliberate or extorted consent of the Baltic states, were to occupy the latter and send her troops through their territory, it would not be fair if England and France were to refuse to join Russia in opposing this measure, as Russia would assist them in defending the Rhine frontier."

Again, the Very Rev. A. S. Duncan-Jones (Dean of Chichester), after returning from Latvia and Estonia, where he had "many conversations with business and professional people," referring to the uneasiness in these little republics, wrote:

"At bottom, this state of affairs was due to the suspicion that the British Government is not attempting to create a peace front to uphold international order and to protect the weak, but merely playing power politics in defence of 'British interests.' The events of last year have produced a deep-seated distrust among all these smaller peoples, who formerly were strong supporters of the League of Nations. Now they are all for neutrality, even though they admit that it is a gesture of despair" (*Manchester Guardian*, August 21, 1939).

The Dean continued: "The argument that was used time and again was as follows: How is it possible that a

Government whose policy of 'appeasement' resulted in the complete destruction of the friendly state of Czechoslovakia is still in power?"

However, the Baltic states and Finland, although they rejected guarantees from Britain, France and the Soviet Union, nevertheless, to quote a *Times* leader, July 10, 1939, wished "to consider themselves free, should such an attack ever be made, to call upon a Great Power to help them against the Great Power guilty of aggression."

But it surely does not require much imagination to realise that whilst the Baltic states were requesting and the Western Powers considering the granting of aid, a sudden and rapid attack by Germany would in all probability have led to a German occupation of Liepāja (Libau), Tallinn, Riga and Ventspils (Windau) as well as the islands of Dagö and Ösel. This would have signified the control of the Baltic by Germany, her domination and exploitation of the Baltic states for her own purposes, and in addition it would have meant a direct threat to Leningrad.

The exact proposals made by the Soviet Government regarding the Baltic states during the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations have not been disclosed. British journals, both at the time of the negotiations and subsequently, have suggested that the Soviets wanted a free hand to intervene in the internal affairs of these states whenever they judged it necessary or convenient. On the other hand, the Soviet Government denied these allegations emphatically. In the course of an authorised statement on August 1, 1939, the Soviet official Tass Agency declared that the difference between the U.S.S.R., on the one hand, and France and Britain, on the other, "is not whether to encroach or not to encroach on the independence of the Baltic states, because both sides stand for guaranteeing this independence, but that no

loophole should be left in the formula 'indirect aggression' for aggressors making an attempt on the independence of the Baltic states. One of the reasons for the delay in the negotiations is that the British formula leaves such a loophole for the aggressor."

Earlier the same year, in a speech delivered at the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R., May 31, 1939, M. Molotov thus defined the "minimum conditions" laid down by the Soviet Government for the formation of an effective peace front against aggression:

"The conclusion of an effective pact of mutual assistance against aggression, a pact of an exclusively defensive character between Great Britain, France and the U.S.S.R.

"A guarantee against attack by aggressors on the part of Great Britain, France and the U.S.S.R. to the states of central and eastern Europe, including all the European countries bordering on the U.S.S.R. without exception.

"The conclusion of a concrete agreement by Great Britain, France and the U.S.S.R. regarding the forms and the extent of the immediate and effective assistance to be given to each other and to the guaranteed states in the event of an attack by the aggressors."

It will be seen that the Soviets wanted agreement for concrete action immediately the need arose, not a mere agreed formula which, whilst it might delude us into a false security, would remain ineffective should the time arrive to apply to the aggressor, not words, but deeds.

Lord Halifax, on December 5, 1939, in the course of a speech in the House of Lords, declared:

"Events have shown that the judgment and the instinct of His Majesty's Government in refusing agreement with the Soviet Government on the terms of

formulæ covering cases of indirect aggression on the Baltic states were right. For it is now plain that these formulæ might well have been the cloak of ulterior designs. I have little doubt that the people of this country would prefer to face difficulties and embarrassment rather than feel that we had compromised the honour of this country and of the Commonwealth on such issues" (*House of Lords Report*, December 5, 1939, col. 128).

Such reasoning is surely absurd. Had an honest concrete agreement for mutual protection against aggression been arrived at between the U.S.S.R., Britain and France, the feeling of security produced all round would have been such as would in all probability have rallied all the smaller states—including, of course, the Baltic states—to this peace front, and the war would undoubtedly have been definitely prevented by this formidable combination. However, had Germany, in spite of all this, menaced the peace and independence of any of the guaranteed smaller states, either directly or indirectly, and had it been found necessary for the U.S.S.R. to occupy the strategic points on the Baltic mentioned in previous and subsequent pages, the sovereignty of the Baltic states and Finland would in no way have been menaced by such an occupation.

On the other hand, it was precisely the failure of the negotiations for the formation of an effective peace front which made the occupation by the U.S.S.R. of the strategic bases on the Baltic an imperative and urgent step for, so the Soviet leaders argued—remembering past history—she could now fear the use of the small Baltic states and Finland as *places d'armes* for an attack upon the U.S.S.R., not only by Germany, but also in the near or more distant future by other Great Powers.



It is not necessary to deal here any further with the breakdown of the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations, nor with the signature of the German-Soviet Pact of Non-Aggression, the invasion of Poland by Germany, the flight of the Polish Government and the complete collapse of its armed forces, only to add that all combined radically changed the situation in the Baltic area.

#### SOVIET PACTS WITH THE BALTIC STATES

THE Soviet Government, having been unable to establish a common peace front with the Western Powers, not unnaturally decided to endeavour as far as possible to secure her own frontiers against an attack by any Power or combination of Powers. With this object in view, the Soviet Government first of all concluded a pact of non-aggression with Germany, and, having prevented the latter from reaching the Soviet borders by a Soviet occupation of the Polish provinces of Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia (provinces in which the Poles formed a tiny minority and which were generally recognised in 1919-20 as rightly belonging to Russia), they set about making themselves secure in the Baltic.

It may be recalled once again that the Baltic states and Finland had belonged to Tsarist Russia. When the Soviets assumed power in Russia, they proclaimed the right of all nationalities to self-determination, and they were also prepared and did grant the Baltic states and Finland the right to secede from the rest of Russia, but that did not by any means signify that the Soviet Government did not recognise the great importance of the

strategic ports and naval and supply bases on the Baltic to the defence of Soviet Russia. However, in 1918-20, when the Soviet Government recognised the independence of the three Baltic states and Finland, Soviet Russia was in the midst of a bitter civil war instigated and supported by foreign military intervention, and subjected to blockade by the Allied Powers. She was too weak then to insist, as she probably would have done were it not for the overwhelming odds against her, on the cession to her of the vital strategic points on the Baltic formerly possessed by Tsarist Russia. Needless to say, this would in no way have impaired the independent sovereignty of the Baltic states and Finland.

It is also necessary to remember that in 1918-20 workers' governments were set up in the three Baltic states and Finland. Had these governments not been overthrown, in some cases by the Germans, in others by the Allies, and in the case of Lithuania by the Poles, the guarantee of security so essential to the Soviets would, of course, have been assured.

So long as there was peace of a kind in Europe, the Soviet Government was unwilling to disturb in any way this uneasy and unstable peace in order to obtain the strategic points on the Baltic so essential for the security of the U.S.S.R. With the outbreak of war, the position changed radically. In the first place, there was the very real possibility of the spread of the war and the seizure of one or more of the three small Baltic states and Finland by one or other belligerents for use, either immediately or at a little later date, as jumping-off grounds for an attack upon the U.S.S.R. Moreover, it could no longer be urged that the solution of the problem of Soviet security in the Baltic might precipitate war; on the contrary, it would now signify the limitation of the war

already raging in Europe. Finally, the fact that Germany and the Western Powers were at war made the solution of the question of Soviet security on the Baltic a much easier, as well as a more urgent, proposition than it had been formerly. Accordingly, the Soviet Government invited the Governments of the three Baltic states and Finland to start negotiations for realistic pacts of mutual assistance.

Negotiations proceeded in Moscow from September 24 to 28, 1939, between representatives of the Estonian and Soviet Governments; these were terminated on the latter date by the signature of a pact of mutual assistance and a trade agreement.

The Preamble to the Pact read:

"The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., on the one side, and the President of the Estonian Republic on the other side, for the purpose of developing the friendly relations established by the peace treaty of February 2, 1920, and based on the recognition of the independent state existence and non-intervention in the internal affairs of the other party, recognising that the peace treaty of February 2, 1920, and the pact of non-aggression and the peaceful settlement of conflicts of May 4, 1932, form as heretofore a firm basis for their mutual relations and undertakings; convinced that the definition of the exact conditions of insuring mutual security corresponds to the interests of both Contracting Parties, found it necessary to conclude the following pact of mutual assistance and appointed for this purpose as their authorised representatives:

"The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., V. M. Molotov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs; the President of the Estonian Republic, Kaarel Selter, Minister of Foreign Affairs."

The Text is as follows:

#### *"Article I"*

"The two Contracting Parties undertake to render each other every assistance, including military, in the event of direct aggression or the menace of aggression arising on the part of any great European Power against the maritime frontiers of the Contracting Parties in the Baltic Sea or their land frontiers through the territory of the Latvian Republic, as well as against the bases set forth in Article III.

#### *"Article II"*

"The U.S.S.R. undertakes to render the Estonian Army assistance in armaments and other military equipment on favourable terms.

#### *"Article III"*

"The Estonian Republic secures to the Soviet Union the right to maintain naval bases and several aerodromes for aviation on lease at reasonable terms on the Estonian islands of Saaremaa (Ösel), Hiiumaa (Dagö) and in the town of Paldiski (Baltiski Port). The exact sites for the bases and aerodromes shall be allotted and their boundaries defined by mutual agreement.

"For the protection of the naval bases and aerodromes, the U.S.S.R. has the right to maintain at its own expense on the sites allotted for the bases and aerodromes Soviet armed land and air forces of strictly limited strength, their maximum numbers to be determined by special agreement.

#### *"Article IV"*

"The two Contracting Parties undertake not to conclude any alliances nor to participate in coalitions directed against one of the Contracting Parties.



*"Article V"*

"Realisation of this pact shall not affect to any extent the sovereign rights of the Contracting Parties, in particular their economic systems and State organisation.

"The sites allotted for the bases and aerodromes (Article III) remain the territory of the Estonian Republic.

*"Article VI"*

"The present pact comes into force upon the exchange of instruments of ratification. The exchange of said instruments shall take place in the city of Tallinn within six days of the date of the signing of the present pact.

"The term of validity of the present pact is 10 years and if one of the Contracting Parties does not find it necessary to denounce the present pact one year prior to the expiration of its term, the pact shall automatically continue valid for the next five years.

*"Article VII"*

"The present pact is done in two originals in the Russian and Estonian languages in the city of Moscow on September 28, 1939.

"V. MOLOTOV. K. SELTER.  
"September 28, 1939."

The Trade Agreement provided for an increase of four and a half times in the trade turnover between the two countries, and fixed the amount of the general turnover between the two states at 39,000,000 Estonian kronas.

The Soviet Union granted the Estonian Republic the right of transit for its goods along the railways and waterways of the Soviet Union to Murmansk, Soroka, and to the ports of the Black Sea. The Trade Agreement

also provided for a great extension of the transit of Soviet goods through Estonian ports. After leaving the U.S.S.R., M. Selter sent a warm message of thanks for the efficiency and goodwill with which the negotiations had been conducted on both sides. M. Molotov replied in similar cordial terms.

The Pact was promptly ratified by both Governments, and a few days after its signature a technical commission arrived in Tallinn to work out with the Estonian authorities the detailed and practical application of the Agreement.

The conclusion of the Pact was well received by the Estonian Press. The *Majaomanikude Teataja*, October 1, 1939, stated:

"The Soviet-Estonian Pact fulfils a great task, the task of protecting all of the Baltic countries.

"Whereas apprehensions existed earlier as to whether we would be involved in the struggle of the Great Powers, we now know where we stand. We can continue our work in peace. The Pact affirms the defence of our independence and does not encroach upon our economic system and State structure."

The *Uus Eesti* of the same date averred:

"The obligations for assistance are mutual. In actual fact, however, the Soviet Union will help Estonia whenever we are attacked; we, on the other hand, will help the Soviet Union only when it is attacked through Estonia or in the immediate vicinity of Estonia. In other words, military co-operation between Estonia and the Soviet Union is foreseen in the event that the security of both States is threatened simultaneously:

"No doubt exists that the Soviet Union has greater obligations than Estonia, since it must render assistance in all cases when Estonia is subjected to attack."

The *Rahvaleht*, September 30, 1939, declared:

"The Pact of co-operation has settled questions which in other quarters have led to terrible bloodshed.

"What can raise the prestige of the great Soviet Power higher in the eyes of the whole world than such possibilities of co-operating with a small State? A better example of peaceful co-operation could scarcely be furnished."

As regards the trading agreement, the *Uus Eesti* of October 1, 1939, welcomed it very warmly, and declared:

"Estonian industry had always worked mainly for markets in the East, and Estonian economic circles always considered that sooner or later trade relations between the U.S.S.R. and Estonia were bound to become far more extensive."

After pointing out that the geographical position of Estonia made this inevitable, the journal stressed that, as a result of the agreement, the trade turnover between the two countries would be far in excess of the former turnover, and continued:

"Estonia can in the first instance sell her agricultural produce on the Soviet market. We shall receive from the U.S.S.R. all that which Estonia lacks—metal, cotton, etc. The U.S.S.R. is, as regards her natural resources, the richest in the world, and we shall be able to obtain from there all the materials we require."

Finally, the journal was particularly pleased with the extended transit facilities over the U.S.S.R. accorded in the agreement to Estonian goods.

Similarly, the *Baltic Times*, published in Tallinn, in a leader in its issue of October 5, 1939, stressed the great importance of the Soviet-Estonian Trade Agreement for

Estonian foreign trade, and particularly the transit facilities which Estonia obtained under that agreement. It pointed out, further, that, in view of the present practical closing of the Baltic, it is of the utmost importance for Estonia to be able to export her goods through the Soviet ports on the Black Sea and the Arctic Ocean. The Treaty, the paper considered, will be of great benefit to both sides.

On October 5, 1939, the Soviet Military Delegation in Tallinn gave a dinner at the Soviet Embassy in honour of the Estonian-Soviet Military Mission. Amongst other guests, there were also present M. Selter, Estonian Foreign Minister, and General Laidoner, Commander-in-Chief of the Estonian Army.

Giving the toast of the Soviet Army, M. Selter, amongst other things, declared:

"Already in 1920, Soviet Russia and the Estonian Republic had concluded a peace agreement. Friendly relations between the two countries have now been further developed. The Estonian Government will carry out the Mutual Assistance Pact honestly.

"The Soviet Army, aviation and Navy is a mighty force and this Army is our ally. I raise my glass to the Soviet Army."

General Laidoner, speaking at the same function, declared:

"We know that it is impossible for the great Soviet Power to remain in a corner of the Finnish Gulf. The U.S.S.R. must have an outlet to the Baltic.

"We are solving an historic problem. It is said that there can be no sincere friendship between a great and little state, but we see that such a friendship is being realised between ourselves and the U.S.S.R. We know from history that it often takes years to solve such



questions, but we have solved them in essence within three days. In this we have been helped particularly by the leader of the peoples of the U.S.S.R.—Stalin. I raise my glass to Stalin.”

As time went on, the Estonian leaders and Press saw that their first impression of the Pact with the U.S.S.R. was fully justified. Thus in a speech delivered in Tallinn, October 12, 1939, General Laidoner paid a tribute to the friendly and efficient manner in which the provisions of the Soviet-Estonian Mutual Assistance Pact were being applied. After analysing the present strained position of international affairs, General Laidoner continued:

“We have bound the fate of our state and people in a certain sense with the Mutual Assistance Pact with the Soviet Union. The Soviet Government had, in this connection, once again emphasised the constancy of their peace policy and their desire to continue it. This is a great positive factor for the future of our state and our people.”

General Laidoner expressed his conviction that the Pact in no way violated Estonian sovereignty and his complete confidence, based on experience, that both sides would carry out its provisions loyally.

The Prime Minister of Estonia, M. Uluots, in the Estonian Parliament, spoke at length, on October 20, 1939, regarding the present international position, and of the desire of Estonia to maintain peace and friendly relations with all her neighbours, as well as with other countries, and continued:

“True to this aim, the Estonian Republic, on September 28, concluded an important Pact with the Soviet Union. This Pact has placed our relations with our great eastern neighbour on a basis of confidence

and mutual assistance. It is on this basis that the Pact is being carried out by the two contracting parties.”

The Estonian Press, as well as the Press of Finland and the other Baltic states, reported that the arrival of the Soviet troops in Estonia took place in an entirely friendly atmosphere. The *Uus Eesti*, October 17, 1939, in a leader dealing with the arrival of Soviet troops in Estonia in accordance with the Pact, declared:

“Before the arrival of the Soviet troops, some foreign circles let loose an intensive stream of absurd rumours that this would mark the Sovietisation of Estonia and Latvia. . . . These rumours are aimed at disturbing our good relations with our eastern neighbour. But they will fail to do this. We know that the conclusion of the Mutual Assistance Pact and its realisation has taken and is taking place in an atmosphere of mutual confidence and co-operation. All these ridiculous rumours emanate from our enemies. We deny them as energetically and categorically as the Soviet Press has denied them.”

The *Rahvaleht*, October 17, 1939, stressed that the Pact, without violating the sovereign rights of the two contracting parties, served the defensive and vital economic interests of both countries:

“The Soviet troops,” said the journal, “are coming to Estonia, not in order to exercise any sort of protectorate over Estonia; nor is their aim to establish a new political order or spread new theories. Any rumours to this effect are absurd and devoid of any foundation. The function of the Soviet troops is to strengthen strategic points and in co-operation with Estonian forces jointly to defend both countries against any attacks or threats of attack by any strong European State.”

By the night of October 21, 1939, the stationing of the Red Army detachments on Dagö Island was completed, and the Estonian Press, reporting the arrival of Soviet troops in Dagö and Ösel, stressed the fact that the Soviet authorities had taken great care to instruct their troops as to the provisions of the Soviet-Estonian Mutual Assistance Pact and their behaviour when quartered in a friendly country. The journals emphasised that the Red Army sections observed strictly the plan and conditions of their transfer and stay in Estonia, that they were well provided with all necessities and had not in any way whatever disturbed the local Estonian population.

In the course of a radio speech in Tallinn, October 27, 1939, the new Minister for Foreign Affairs of Estonia, Professor A. Piip, said:

"To-morrow, a month will have passed since the conclusion of the Soviet-Estonian Mutual Assistance Pact, based on mutual respect for and an understanding of the vital interests of the two sides."

After referring to the 1920 treaty with the U.S.S.R. and to the misrepresentations of this treaty in other countries, the Minister continued:

"As at that time, so now, rumours are being spread that, as a result of the Pact, Estonia had ceased her independent existence and that our internal life was being Sovietised. . . . However, the Pact has already been applied and Soviet troops have already taken up their stations in Estonia, but conditions in Estonia, in so far as present war conditions permit, continue to be as normal as ever and the Estonian people are developing their life as a state freely and independently on the basis of friendly and confident relations with their big eastern neighbour."

M. Piip stressed that the Pact in no way violated any of Estonia's sovereign rights, and continued:

"We note with satisfaction that all sections of our population and the Soviet troops who have arrived in friendly Estonia understand one another, and are treating one another with the same mutual confidence and respect as their Governments had done when concluding the Pact."

"The Mutual Assistance Pact is not an Alliance or coalition directed against anyone whatever. It is of a limited and purely defensive character. It only gives additional support and definition to the peace system and neutrality on the Baltic Sea and is a powerful defence and guarantee of peace and neutrality for all states on the shores of the Baltic."

As for the neutrality of Estonia, the Minister declared:

"The Pact in no way touches our neutrality in the present war. The U.S.S.R. is not a belligerent and even if she were a belligerent we could continue to be neutral so long as our frontiers and the frontiers of the U.S.S.R. in the region of the Baltic Sea were not violated by some big European Power."

The provincial Estonian Press also extended a warm welcome to the Mutual Assistance Pact and Trade Agreement with the U.S.S.R.

As regards the Soviet Press, the following few extracts from *Izvestia* and *Pravda* illustrate their attitude:

*Izvestia*, September 30, 1939, in the course of a leader, declared:

"The Mutual Assistance Pact with Estonia is significant in that the U.S.S.R., in ensuring her security at this point, is ready to come to the defence of her neighbours—the small states—to defend their



independence and their sovereign rights against any threat from the big imperialist Powers. Whenever any country displays a real endeavour to live in peace and friendship with the U.S.S.R., our state is always ready to meet wholeheartedly such a manifestation of goodwill, and to accept co-operation on the basis of mutual help and the assurance of the mutual interests of the two sides."

*Pravda*, September 30, 1939, in the course of a leader, declared:

"In order to ensure the mutual security of the U.S.S.R. and Estonia against an attack on either state by any third state, the Estonian Republic—as is stated in Article III of the Agreement—grants the Soviet Union the right to maintain on the Estonian islands of Ösel and Dagö and in the town of Baltiski naval bases and a few aerodromes for the air fleet on territory leased by the Soviet Government at a reasonable rental.

"In addition, for the protection of these naval bases and aerodromes, the Soviet Union is empowered to maintain on the leased territory, at its own expense, a strictly limited number of land and air forces. . . ."

*Izvestia*, October 3, 1939, carried a lengthy article by M. Ivanov (a correspondent-member of the Academy of Science of the U.S.S.R.) on the Soviet-Estonian Mutual Assistance Pact and the strategic position in the Baltic, in the course of which the author pointed out that Tsarist Russia, having command of the naval bases in Finland and the Baltic states, as well as on the islands of the Gulf of Finland and the Gulf of Riga, was in a position to defend the approaches to Petrograd even when her opponents were immeasurably stronger naval Powers. He gave examples of this. However, with the granting of independence to Finland and the Baltic states, Soviet

Russia had lost all these bases. At the same time, the imperialist Powers have made it perfectly clear, said the author, that at the first opportunity the Baltic states would be used as starting-points for an attack upon the U.S.S.R. Such acts would, of course, threaten in the first instance the sovereign rights of the small states themselves. "On the other hand," continued Ivanov, "the growing naval strength of the U.S.S.R. and the strengthening of her strategic position forms the best guarantee for the security and vital interests of her neighbouring Baltic states. . . ."

After referring to the strategic importance of Ösel and Dagö Islands and of the Baltiski port, Ivanov concluded: "All this taken together greatly extends the operative power of our Baltic fleet and also of our air force at the approaches to the Finnish and Riga Gulfs and on the Baltic generally. This in its turn is a powerful factor in guaranteeing the security of the Baltic states and the establishment of a firm peace in this part of Europe."

In the course of an article on Estonia in *Pravda*, October 3, 1939, J. Glushakov pointed out that the Soviet-Estonian Pact is a manifestation of the Soviet peace policy, and, referring to the strained international position, he declared: "The question of the security of all the frontiers and approaches to the U.S.S.R. had become of vital importance. One such approach is Estonia, and the Mutual Assistance Pact with the latter makes it considerably easier for the U.S.S.R. to strengthen her western frontiers."

The Trade Agreement, the author pointed out, would consolidate the economic relations between the two countries. He discussed at some length the economic and particularly the geographical position of Estonia and the importance of Reval (now Tallinn) as a Tsarist naval base prior to the War of 1914-18, and declared:

"As a result of its geographical position and its strategic importance, Estonia had always attracted the attention of the imperialist Powers, who endeavoured to strengthen their economic and political position in that small country. It is worth recalling that in 1919 the British Fleet itself on this territory endeavoured to attack Kronstadt."

Turning again to the Soviet-Estonian Pact, the author proceeded: "The Mutual Assistance Pact, which empowers the U.S.S.R. to establish naval bases and a number of aerodromes on the Ösel and Dagö Isles and in Baltiski port, thus removes the danger of Estonia being utilised as a jumping-off ground for an attack upon the U.S.S.R. The Soviet-Estonian Pact essentially changes the relation of forces in the Baltic and gives the Red Banner Baltic Fleet an opportunity to safeguard the Soviet coasts; at the same time the Pact also ensures the security of Estonia itself."

The new Trade Agreement will do much to help Estonia economically, and this will be doubly welcome at a time when direct trade between that country and countries outside the Baltic is very difficult. Estonia largely lived on the Russian market prior to 1917. A writer in the *Moscow News*, October 9, 1939, explained: "Life in the Estonian ports came to a standstill after the World War of 1914-18. The leading branches of industry entered a decline. Suffice it to refer to the large textile combinat in Narva, which now employs 2,000 workers, as compared with 14,000 in 1914. The once important shipbuilding and engineering industries have almost ceased to exist. Along with the steady 'disindustrialisation' of the country, the cultivation of industrial crops has likewise declined sharply. The entire character of the national economy of Estonia has changed. Whereas formerly it

was an agrarian and industrial country, to-day it is predominantly agrarian. This has affected the occupations of the population. Nearly 70 per cent. of the total population of 1,131,000 is now engaged in agriculture and only 13.5 per cent. in industry. This could not but affect the living standards of the people; the annual increase in population is not more than 2 per 1,000."

The writer concluded on a cheerful note: "The improved economic relations with the Soviet Union and the transit agreement promise much for Estonia's national economy. Close business connections with the large Soviet market will revive Estonian economy to a considerable extent, cheapen imports, make the export trade more profitable, increase the business of Estonia's ports and, possibly, revive some branches of Estonian industry that are now idle."

Soviet-Estonian negotiations having been concluded, negotiations were started in Moscow on October 2, 1939, between representatives of the Latvian and Soviet Governments, and on October 5 a Pact of Mutual Assistance was concluded, of which the Preamble read:

"The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R. on the one side, and the President of the Latvian Republic on the other side, for the purpose of developing the friendly relations established by the peace treaty of August 11, 1920, and based on recognition of the independent state existence and non-intervention in the internal affairs of the other Party; recognising that the peace treaty of August 11, 1920, and the Pact of Non-Aggression and the peaceful settlement of conflicts of February 5, 1932, form as heretofore a firm basis for their mutual relations and undertakings; convinced that the definition of the exact conditions of insuring mutual security meets the interests of both



contracting Parties, found it necessary to conclude the following Pact of Mutual Assistance and appointed for this purpose as their authorised representatives:

"The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., V. M. Molotov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs; the President of the Latvian Republic, Vilhelm Munters, Minister of Foreign Affairs."

The following is the Text of the Pact:

*"Article I"*

"The two Contracting Parties undertake to render each other every assistance, including military, in the event of direct aggression or the menace of aggression arising on the part of any great European Power against the maritime frontiers of the Contracting Parties in the Baltic Sea or their land frontiers through the territory of the Estonian or the Lithuanian Republics, as well as against the bases set forth in Article III.

*"Article II"*

"The Soviet Union undertakes to render the Latvian Army assistance in armaments and other military equipment on favourable terms.

*"Article III"*

"For the purpose of guaranteeing the security of the U.S.S.R. and consolidating her own independence, the Latvian Republic grants the Union the right to maintain naval bases in the towns of Liepaja (Libava) and Ventspils (Vindava) and several aerodromes for aviation on lease at reasonable terms. The exact sites for the bases and aerodromes shall be allotted and their boundaries defined by mutual agreement.

"For the protection of the Irben Strait, the Soviet

Union is granted the right to establish on the same conditions a coast artillery base on the coast between Ventspils and Pitragi.

"For the protection of the naval bases, aerodromes and coast artillery base, the Soviet Union has the right to maintain at its own expense on the sites allotted for the bases and aerodromes Soviet armed land and air forces of strictly limited strength, their maximum numbers to be determined by special agreement.

*"Article IV"*

"Both Contracting Parties undertake not to conclude any alliances nor to participate in coalitions against either one of the Contracting Parties.

*"Article V"*

"Realisation of this Pact shall not affect to any extent the sovereign rights of the Contracting Parties, in particular their State organisation, economic and social systems and military measures.

"The sites allotted for the bases and aerodromes (Article III) remain the territory of the Latvian Republic.

*"Article VI"*

"The present Pact comes into force upon the exchange of instruments of ratification. The exchange of the instruments shall take place in the city of Riga within six days of the date of signing of the present Pact.

"The term of validity of the present Pact is 10 years and unless one of the Contracting Parties finds it necessary to denounce the present Pact one year prior to the expiration of its term, the Pact shall automatically continue valid for the next 10 years.

"In witness whereof the above-mentioned authorised representatives have signed the present Pact and affixed their seals thereto.

"Done in the city of Moscow in two originals, in the Russian and Lettish languages, on October 5, 1939.  
"V. MOLOTOV. V. MUNTERS."

After the signature of the Pact, the following communique was issued:

"In a conversation between Comrade V. M. Molotov, Chairman of the Council of People's Commissars and People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs of the U.S.S.R., and Mr. V. Munters, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia, in the presence of Comrade J. V. Stalin and Mr. F. Kocins, the Latvian Envoy, which took place in connection with the signing of the Latvian-Soviet Pact of Mutual Assistance, both sides came to the unanimous opinion that an essential factor for the successful application of the Pact of Mutual Assistance is the mutual confidence established in the course of the long years of the development of the existing friendly relations between the two states.

"Having taken as a basis for the Pact of Mutual Assistance the firm principles of the Peace Treaty and the Non-Aggression Pact, both sides confirmed once more the unconditional recognition of the sovereign rights of each State, their principle of non-intervention in its internal affairs. Having become convinced by many years' experience that the difference in the State systems of the two countries presents no obstacle to their fruitful collaboration, each party declared that in the new situation arising out of the Pact of Mutual Assistance it would always be guided by respect for the State, social and economic structure of the other party, thus consolidating the basis for peaceful, good-neighbourly collaboration between their peoples."

M. Munters, on arrival at the frontier on his way home, sent a telegram to M. Molotov expressing his appreciation

of the manner in which the negotiations had been conducted. In the course of his reply, M. Molotov expressed "the firm conviction that this Pact will serve the cause of lasting peace and the prosperity of the peoples of Latvia and the U.S.S.R."

Both the Soviet and the Latvian Press hailed the Pact as an instrument for the preservation of the peace and security of both the U.S.S.R. and Latvia. Thus, *Izvestia* editorially (October 6, 1939) commented: "It is unnecessary to explain the importance of this Pact for the consolidation of the defence capacity of the Soviet State and for the establishment of lasting peace in eastern Europe and the Baltic Basin. Like the recently signed Soviet-Estonian Mutual Assistance Pact, the Soviet-Latvian Pact creates new obstacles for any aggression in eastern Europe and lastingly strengthens peaceful relations in an area highly important for international peace."

The article stressed the fact that both countries had mutually undertaken to respect one another's State, social and economic structure; that experience had shown that differences in the latter were no obstacle to peaceful collaboration between countries and that the Pact testified to the mutual confidence which formed the basis for the new Pact, mutual confidence of peoples that preserves and strengthens stable, lasting peace in the east of Europe.

*Izvestia*, in another article in the same issue, explained at some length what Latvia had lost commercially by separation from the Soviet Union. After stressing that in 1914 Latvia was one of the most industrially developed provinces of Tsarist Russia and that the Russian market absorbed 75 per cent. to 90 per cent. of its industrial output, the article continued:

"After the formation of the Latvia of to-day, her



industry lost the huge Russian market. Latvian industry could not compete on the world market with the industry of the highly developed capitalist Powers. Owing to the poverty of the population, her home market was quite negligible and in less than twenty years Latvia changed from an industrial to an agrarian country.

"To-day Latvia has practically no large-scale industry at all. Its metal and chemical industries, which played a prime rôle in the country's economy before the War, has been reduced to the status of third-rate branches of economy."

Latvia's ports were also badly hit:

"The transit of Russian raw material and goods through the ports of Riga, Libava and Vindava contributed to a considerable extent to the industrial development of these regions and to the population's prosperity. In 1913, 20.6 per cent. of the imports and 22.3 per cent. of the exports of the former Russian Empire passed through these ports."

Finally, the article pointed out that the loss of Soviet transit traffic had led to a decline in railway and river transport and "former busy Latvian ports fell into a prolonged state of depression and the population began to abandon these places. In Liepaja (Libava) the number of inhabitants dropped to almost half as compared to 1914: 57,000 instead of 100,000. Approximately the same holds true for Ventspils (Vindava) and Jelgava."

*Pravda*, October 6, 1939, discussing the Soviet-Latvian Treaty in a leader, amongst other things, said:

"Already the Mutual Assistance Pact between the U.S.S.R. and Estonia, which gave the Soviet Union

the right to have on the islands of Ösel and Dagö and in the town of Baltiski bases for its naval fleet and a number of aerodromes for its aviation, has altered the position in the Baltic. Leningrad and the whole north-west of the U.S.S.R. is now defended, not only on the side of Kronstadt, but also on that of Ösel, Dagö and Baltiski. And now the security of north-western U.S.S.R. will be further strengthened in the towns of Libava and Ventspils (Vindava) by the establishment of bases for a naval fleet and aerodromes for aviation."

On the other hand, stressed the journal, the Latvian Republic would now be defended by the powerful aid of the Soviet Union, not only on sea, but also on land. "Latvia has practically no navy and no strong aviation of its own. Before the conclusion of this Pact Latvia might have become the victim of aggression on the part of the imperialist Powers. Henceforth, the people of Latvia know that the sovereign rights of the Latvian Republic and its independence are secured by her Mutual Assistance Pact with the great Soviet Union."

The journal proceeded to point out that the Government of the U.S.S.R. always treated the sovereign rights of other countries with respect and said: "The Soviet-Estonian and Soviet-Latvian negotiations have shown once again very clearly how meticulously the Soviet Government observes the rights of small nations, how greatly the policy of the great Socialist Power differs from the policy of the imperialist states, with what respect the Soviet Government listens to and discusses the proposals made by the small states."

The new agreement with the Soviet Union should do much to revive Latvian industry and to restore prosperity to her ports.

The Latvian Press and public figures have since

several times expressed their appreciation of the agreement with the U.S.S.R. Here are a few examples:

Speaking to representatives of the Press, October 9, 1939, M. Munters, Latvian Foreign Minister, declared that the form of the Pact was "an expression of the desire of both parties to maintain peace and the *status quo* in the Baltic."

"It is necessary to bear in mind," he continued, "that the Pact was concluded when war was raging, in circumstances when all sorts of unexpected things might happen and when events occur with lightning rapidity. The desire of Latvia not to be drawn into war lay at the basis of our foreign policy from the moment when the possibility of war began to influence the political life of all countries. At the same time, it must be recognised that were Latvia drawn into the war this would undoubtedly constitute a threat to the U.S.S.R., with which we have a common frontier."

The agreement, explained M. Munters, has done away with all such dangers. Both sides having recognised in principle the need for mutual assistance, the question arose as to how to supply it. "The method adopted," continued the Minister, "was in accordance with the geographical position of the two countries and their military possibilities. The joint communique published simultaneously with the text of the Agreement is of very special importance. Finally, I should like to emphasise that the Soviet-Latvian Mutual Assistance Pact consolidates peace and security."

The *Yaunakas Zinios*, October 9, 1939, welcomed the Soviet-Latvian Pact as a great historic event and, after referring to the successful working of previous Soviet-Latvian Pacts, in spite of prognostications to the contrary, declared:

"Like Estonia, we too have accepted certain strategic proposals made by the Soviet Union. The Soviet Press has repeatedly pointed out that the U.S.S.R. had no proper outlets to the Baltic Sea. This limited the activities of the increasingly powerful Soviet Fleet. It is also right that the Soviet Union should be enabled to utilise for its marine trade the shortest passage across the ice-free ports of Latvia and Estonia."

"On the other hand, in the interest of her own security Latvia has concluded the Mutual Assistance Pact with the U.S.S.R. The Latvian people are convinced that the Pact signed on October 5 will be of benefit to both states."

Discussing the Soviet-Latvian Treaty, the *Rīts*, October 18, 1939, stressed the existence of mutual confidence between Latvia and the U.S.S.R., and, referring more particularly to the stationing of troops on Latvian soil, declared:

"Latvia and the U.S.S.R. have common interests—to secure themselves against war. For this purpose, the Soviet Union considers it necessary to defend certain naval bases. And if we desire, in the event of war, to receive effective aid, we must have confidence in the Soviet troops, who will be in our midst exclusively for the purposes provided for in the Mutual Assistance Pact. . . . We, of course, understand that such a huge territory as the U.S.S.R. represents must have outlets to the sea and must be enabled effectively to defend such outlets."

The journal then proceeded to explain that they could have every confidence that the difference in social systems between the two countries will not in any way affect the loyal carrying out of the provisions of the Pact by both sides.



And the same journal, on October 21, 1939, in the course of an article discussing the Soviet-Latvian Trade Agreement, declared:

"The renewed and extended trade agreements of the Soviet Union with the Baltic states will result in a sharp turn for the better in the development and structure of the foreign trade of Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania. They make it possible for the Baltic states to make good the breach made in their trade with Britain, France and the U.S.A., as a result of the extremely difficult shipping conditions."

The journal proceeded to discuss more specifically the Soviet-Latvian Agreement and pointed out that its three main points were: (1) provision for an increase in the general trade turnover between the two countries; (2) the grant to Latvia of the right to the transit of her goods across the Soviet railways and waterways to Murmansk, Saroka and the Black Sea harbours; (3) "a considerable increase in the transit of Soviet goods via our ports. So far this transit has only amounted to 200,000 to 300,000 tons of goods per annum, so that the full capacity of our railways, rivers and ports were very far from being utilised. We welcome the agreement. . . . It will revitalise the activities of our ports and railways."

Speaking in Riga, October 23, 1939, M. Munters, Latvian Minister for Foreign Affairs, amongst other things, declared:

"The Soviet Union based its approach to the new problems confronting it [in connection with the present international situation] on a policy of mutual understanding. The Soviet Government is endeavouring to consolidate its interests, not by way of one-sided actions, but by the conclusion of agreements."

Turning to the question of the possibility of mutual help between two countries so different in size, armed strength and social structure as are the U.S.S.R., and Latvia, M. Munters averred: "Everyone knows that neither the Soviet attitude during the negotiations nor the contents of the Treaty itself showed any signs of any desire for domination. Exactly the contrary was and is the case. The text stresses our sovereign rights in clear language."

As for the contention by some that with the arrival of the Soviet troops Latvia would be Sovietised, the Minister denied any such possibility. He had every confidence that the terms of the Pact would be fulfilled in the letter and the spirit. Finally, he also stressed the importance of the development of Soviet-Latvian trade.

The Latvian Minister for Agriculture, M. J. Birznieks, speaking at a meeting of co-operators, October 29, 1939, stressed the economic importance of the Soviet-Latvian Pact and, as far as the political side of the question was concerned, declared: "No danger whatever threatens us and we have no fear that our sovereign rights will in any way be violated."

The arrival of Soviet troops in Latvia proceeded smoothly and they were met by the Latvian military authorities in the friendliest manner.

Now to turn to the Soviet-Lithuanian Agreements. Negotiations proceeded at Moscow between representatives of the Lithuanian and Soviet Governments from October 3 to 10, 1939. On the latter date a Pact of Mutual Assistance between the two states was signed. The Preamble read:

"The Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the U.S.S.R., on the one side, and the President of the

Lithuanian Republic on the other side, for the purpose of developing the friendly relations established by the Treaty of Peace of July 12, 1920, and based on recognition of the independent State existence and non-intervention in the internal affairs of the other Party; recognising that the Treaty of Peace of July 12, 1920, and the Pact of Non-Aggression and the Peaceful Settlement of Conflicts of September 28, 1926, form as heretofore a firm basis for their mutual relations and undertakings; convinced that the definition of the exact conditions of insuring security and the just settlement of the city of Vilna and Vilna Province, unlawfully wrested from Lithuania by Poland, meet the interests of both Contracting Parties; found it necessary to conclude between them the following Treaty on the Transfer of the City of Vilna and Vilna Province to the Lithuanian Republic and on Mutual Assistance between the Soviet Union and Lithuania."

The text of the instrument is as follows:

*"Article I*

"For the purpose of consolidating the friendship between the U.S.S.R. and Lithuania, the city of Vilna and Vilna Province are transferred by the Soviet Union to the Lithuanian Republic and included in the territory of the Lithuanian State, the boundary between the U.S.S.R. and the Lithuanian Republic being established in accordance with the map appended hereto, which boundary shall be specified in more detail in a supplementary protocol.

*"Article II*

"The Soviet Union and the Lithuanian Republic undertake to render each other every assistance, including military, in the event of aggression or the menace of aggression against Lithuania, as well as in the event of

aggression or the menace of aggression against the Soviet Union through Lithuanian territory on the part of any European Power.

*"Article III*

"The Soviet Union undertakes to render the Lithuanian Army assistance in armaments and other military equipment on favourable terms.

*"Article IV*

"The Soviet Union and the Lithuanian Republic undertake jointly to effect protection of the State boundaries of Lithuania, for which purpose the Soviet Union is granted the right to maintain at its expense, at points in the Lithuanian Republic mutually agreed upon, Soviet armed land and air forces of strictly limited strength. The exact location of these troops and the boundaries within which they may be quartered, their strength at each particular point, and also all other questions, such as economic, administrative, jurisdictional, and other, arising in connection with the presence of Soviet armed forces on the territory of Lithuania under the present Treaty, shall be regulated by special agreements.

"The sites and buildings necessary for this purpose shall be allotted by the Lithuanian Government on lease at reasonable terms.

*"Article V*

"In the event of the menace of aggression against Lithuania or against the U.S.S.R. through the territory of Lithuania, the two Contracting Parties shall immediately discuss the resulting situation and take all measures found necessary by mutual agreement to secure the inviolability of the territory of the Contracting Parties.



*"Articles VI and VII"*

"The two Contracting Parties undertake not to conclude any alliances nor to participate in coalitions directed against either of the Contracting Parties.

"Realisation of this Pact shall not affect to any extent the sovereign rights of the Contracting Parties, in particular their State organisation, economic and social systems, military measures and, in general, the principle of non-intervention in internal affairs.

"The localities in which the Soviet armed land and air forces will be quartered (Article IV of the present Treaty) under all circumstances remain a component part of the territory of the Lithuanian Republic.

*"Article VIII"*

"The term of validity of the present Treaty in regard to the undertakings for mutual assistance between the U.S.S.R. and the Lithuanian Republic (Articles II-VII) is fifteen years and unless one of the Contracting Parties finds it necessary to denounce the provisions of the present Treaty established for a specified term one year prior to the expiration of that term, these provisions shall automatically continue valid for the next ten years.

*"Article IX"*

"The present Treaty comes into force upon the exchange of instruments of ratification. The exchange of the instruments shall take place in the city of Kaunas within six days of the date of the signing of the present Treaty.

"The present Treaty is done in two originals, in the Russian and Lithuanian languages, in the city of Moscow on October 10, 1939.

"V. MOLOTOV. J. URBSIS."

On returning home, M. Urbsis wired M. Molotov:

"On returning to my country, I hasten to convey to you the thanks of the Lithuanian delegation for the warm hospitality shown us in Moscow and for the friendly nature of the negotiations which resulted in the conclusion of our Treaty on October 10. I ask you especially to convey our appreciation to J. V. Stalin for his broad understanding of the aspirations of the Lithuanian people and for his active participation in the negotiations that strengthened the mutual trust and traditional friendship which has invariably existed between our states. The return of the age-old capital of Lithuania, the city of Vilna, and the province has been received by the Lithuanian people with profound joy."

M. Molotov replied:

"I sincerely thank you and the entire Lithuanian delegation for your warm greetings and the sentiments expressed by you on the occasion of the signing of the friendly Soviet-Lithuanian Treaty, on the transfer of the city of Vilna and Vilna Province to the Lithuanian Republic and on mutual assistance between the Soviet Union and Lithuania.

"All the members of the Soviet delegation entertain great satisfaction at the joint work with you in the preparation of this Treaty conducive to the further strengthening of the friendship to the peaceful development and to the prosperity of the peoples of Lithuania and the Soviet Union.

"I express the firm conviction that our new Pact will serve the cause of consolidating peace in eastern Europe."

The conclusion of the Treaty was hailed with delirious joy throughout Lithuania by the Press, leading public figures and the population.

The newspapers featured the text of the instrument

on their front pages, in many cases accompanied with portraits of Stalin, Molotov and Voroshilov.

The *XX Amzhus* of October 7, 1939, wrote:

"The Soviet Union has always been consistent in its foreign policy. One of the fundamental ideas which the U.S.S.R. has always emphasised and is emphasising is universal peace. Guided by this principle, the Soviet Union has concluded non-aggression Pacts with her neighbours, and to consolidate friendly relations she has also striven to develop trade with them."

The U.S.S.R. still pursues this policy. "From our side," continued the journal, "we welcome the Soviet peace policy. . . . Whilst we have often met with hostility in the Press of the western European countries, there has never been a single case of the Soviet Union carrying on any propaganda hostile to our state."

The *Lietuvos Zinios* declared that: "The Lithuanian people have every ground for rejoicing, since an injury done to Lithuania by the Polish usurpers nineteen years ago has now been remedied."

The *Lietuvos Aidas*, October 11, 1939, stated:

"The leaders of the U.S.S.R. have upheld the just demands of Lithuania from the beginning of Lithuanian independence.

"The whole world has the opportunity of convincing itself that the great Soviet Union knows how to value the peaceful policy of its neighbours. The U.S.S.R. has always been known as a champion of a policy of peace. In this respect Lithuania has always well understood the peace policy pursued by the U.S.S.R."

As to the future, the journal concluded: "The Treaty of Mutual Assistance between Lithuania and the U.S.S.R. will doubtless bring the two countries still closer together.

Lithuania never objected to developing her relations with the Soviet Union in the past, when she did not have a common frontier with the U.S.S.R. These relations will now naturally begin to develop still further."

And in another issue, on October 16, 1939, the *Lietuvos Aidas* declared:

"The new Treaty is not only a proof of friendship between the two countries, but it is a guide for the security of both countries. The Treaty provides for mutual assistance and threatens no one; consequently it is a positive factor for the consolidation of peace in eastern Europe."

The Lithuanian weekly journal, *Apzhvalga*, in the course of a leading article, after reviewing the history of Soviet-Lithuanian relations, declared:

"Ever since the problem of Vilna arose, the Soviet Union always publicly proclaimed her sympathy with Lithuania's historical ideals. . . . The Soviet Union repeatedly stressed that she would defend all approaches to her frontiers. But the U.S.S.R. is continuing her policy of strengthening her own frontiers with a policy which recognises the self-determination of peoples. The new agreement between Lithuania and the U.S.S.R. is based precisely on the combination of these two aims."

Speaking at a mass demonstration at Kaunas, October 11, 1939, President Smetona proclaimed: "As a result of an agreement with the great Soviet Union, which is friendly towards us, we have received Vilna Province. Relations between Lithuania and the Soviet Union have always been friendly, and this friendship will be consolidated in the future. A pledge of this is the common



frontier with our great neighbour, which we will defend jointly in case of need."

And General Nagevicius, speaking at the same meeting respecting the return of Vilna, declared: "We regard with great respect and friendship the just decision of our great neighbour in our favour."

Not only Lithuanian politicians, but also professors and writers welcomed the Soviet-Lithuanian Treaty. For instance, a well-known Lithuanian writer, Petras Tsvirka, declared in an interview, October 12, 1939:

"The town of Vilna has been given to Lithuania. Thus has been righted the wrong done to Lithuania by the generals and Pans of Poland. Now once again the U.S.S.R. has shown herself to be the true defender and protector of the small nations. The whole Lithuanian people are overjoyed at the transference of Vilna and particularly the conclusion of the Mutual Assistance Pact between the U.S.S.R. and Lithuania. We now know that we have behind us the powerful Soviet Union and that now we can follow our peaceful labour in security. The foremost Lithuanian writers, on whose behalf I am speaking, express their deep gratitude to the Soviet Union and its leaders—to great Stalin, Molotov and Voroshilov."

On the same day, *The Times* published the following cable from their Riga correspondent:

"The acquisition of Vilna, the name of which has in the course of twenty years become for Lithuanians sacred, like that of Mecca for the Moslems or Jerusalem for the Jews, has produced unexampled enthusiasm in Kaunas to-day, where the schools were closed and houses adorned with flags, while strangers kissed each other and danced in the streets. Old people capered like children, forgetting their age and infirmities."

The Soviet Press welcomed the Pact very heartily. *Izvestia*, October 11, 1939, pointed out that the Soviet Government was the only Government which had consistently refused to recognise the violent seizure and annexation of Vilna by Poland in 1920, and that during the whole existence of the Lithuanian Republic its independence was threatened by Poland. The article continued:

"A new and exceptionally important and significant link has been added to-day to the system of foreign policy measures by which the Soviet Government is energetically and actively establishing the requisite conditions for stable and lasting peace in the east of Europe, conditions guaranteeing the mutual security of the Soviet land and its immediate neighbours in the west. . . . The Soviet Union comes forward in this Treaty as a mighty and noble friend of the small countries, re-establishing violated justice and thereby removing sources of enmity and long-continued alarm in international relations."

A leader in *Pravda* on October 11, 1939, discussed the general and constant peace policy of the Soviet Union. It dwelt on the precarious existence of Lithuania ever since its establishment as an independent republic and, after giving a summary of the Soviet-Lithuanian Treaty, concluded:

"The principle of mutual assistance is the *leit-motif* of the text of the Treaty. We obtain additional means for defending our state. The Lithuanian people obtain satisfaction for their fundamental national interest. May the peoples of the world learn from this Soviet policy of friendship and agreement with neighbouring states."

"Why was it possible for the Soviet Government to

solve in a peaceful friendly way questions of foreign policy which in old and recent history and indeed in the most recent history have led to immense bloodshed; questions which have been 'solved' in numerous wars and yet remained unsolved, which formed and still form a menace to further development and culture?

"The reply is clear: the foreign policy of the Socialist country is a policy of peace. It is a policy which aims at the establishment of good neighbourly relations with all states. Friendship between nations lies at the very foundation of the Leninist-Stalinist policy pursued by the Government of the U.S.S.R. . . ."

After the signature of the Soviet-Lithuanian Pact, various organs of the British Press, as well as that of other countries, repeatedly reported that difficulties had arisen on the part of the Soviet Government and troops in the transfer of Vilna to Lithuania. But in spite of this wishful thinking—to put the most charitable construction on those reports—the arrangements for the transfer of the town went on apace and on October 28, 1939, the Prime Minister of Lithuania, General J. Cernius, sent the following wire to M. Molotov:

"At the moment when the Lithuanian troops are entering their ancient capital, Vilna, the Lithuanian people and its Government are full of the most sincere gratitude to the people and Government of the Soviet Union for the active help which they have always rendered to the Lithuanian people in their struggle for a free, independent existence, and for the return to them of their ancient capital—the cradle and witness to their proud, historic past.

"This help was promised by the Treaty of October 10, 1939, which returned Vilna to the bosom of its people, and the entry of the Lithuanian troops into this town to-day is a witness to the realisation of this act.

"May I express to you the deepest gratitude of the Lithuanian people and its Government. Please convey this to the people of the Soviet Union, their leader, Stalin, and to the whole Soviet Government."

To this wire M. Molotov replied as follows:

"I sincerely thank you, M. Premier, for the expression of your warm feelings in regard to the peoples of the Soviet Union, our great Leader, and the whole Soviet Government, who have always understood and supported the striving of the Lithuanian people and its leaders for their national development and well-being.

"Permit me, on behalf of the Soviet Union and its Government, to congratulate very warmly the Lithuanian Government and the whole Lithuanian people at the moment when they are realising their longed-for dream—the reunion of the ancient Lithuanian Vilna to the whole Lithuanian state.

"Allow me also to express my conviction that the further consolidation of friendship between our two countries will serve the interest of peace and prosperity of the peoples of the Lithuanian Republic and the Soviet Union."

At the ceremony accompanying the raising of the Lithuanian flag in Vilna, General Vitkauskas, Commander of the Vilna Garrison, made a speech expressing the deep joy of Lithuania in this rejoining of their ancient capital, and in the course of a subsequent Press interview thanked the Red Army which had liberated Vilna from the Polish usurpers and "had maintained model order in the town." "The town," he continued, "and all its important State possessions—the telegraph, telephone, postal buildings, warehouses, bridges, etc.—in so far as they were not damaged by the Poles, were in excellent condition when we took them over from the Red Army."



The warm gratitude of the Lithuanian Government for the peaceful return of Vilna town and province and their appreciation of the Soviet-Lithuanian Mutual Assistance Pact was again stressed by M. Smetona when, on November 3, 1939, the newly appointed Soviet Ambassador to Lithuania presented his credentials.

Present-day Lithuania is overwhelmingly agricultural. Its industry is little developed and its war industry is almost non-existent. Its coastline since the seizure of Memel by Germany is very short—only about twenty kilometres—and the small port of Palanga, with a population of 2,000 souls, is its only outlet to the sea. However, its railway system is of considerable importance. "Lithuania's railway network is linked with the Latvian port of Liepaja [Libava]," stated *Izvestia*. "A large section of the important Libava-Romny Railway, which covers nearly 2,000 kilometres, runs across Lithuania and links a number of large junctions and centres in western Belorussia and the U.S.S.R. This railway was one of Russia's main freight outlets to the Baltic; and since it linked Russia's centres with the Baltic Sea, it was of great strategic importance during the World War."

A few more words may not be out of place here on the question of how the conclusion of these three Pacts strengthened the Soviet Union strategically, as well as on how they impressed observers abroad. As the two questions interlock, we shall deal with them together.

A writer in the Soviet Press, M. Yurov (after the conclusion of the Soviet-Estonian Pact), pointed out that during the period of civil war and armed intervention, the Entente Powers sought to turn Estonia into a *place d'armes* against Soviet Russia, that Great Britain sent a fleet to Tallinn (Reval) and blockaded the Gulf of Finland. He continued: "Situated at the entrance to the Gulf of

Finland, Estonia, and particularly the Moon Sound Islands belonging to her, constitute the key to the Finnish Gulf. He who commands the Moon Sound archipelago controls the central section of the Baltic Sea."

On the signature of the Soviet-Latvian Pact, *Izvestia*, after pointing out that the ice-free port Liepaja (Libava) has an excellent deep-water roadstead, continued:

"During the civil war Liepaja was used by the British as a base of operations against Soviet Russia. Later on, the enemies of the U.S.S.R., who were plotting to attack the Soviet land looked upon Liepaja as a base for naval operations against the Red Baltic Fleet. The granting of the right to the U.S.S.R. to maintain naval bases in Liepaja and Ventspils makes it possible to guarantee the defence of the Baltic coast and cut short any attempts at aggression in the Baltic Sea.

"The third important city in Latvia is Ventspils. When the Gulf of Riga freezes, the greater part of Latvia's exports are transported through this port. Situated at the point where the Venta River flows into the Baltic, Ventspils makes an exceptionally convenient port."

Particularly interesting is the judgment of a Finnish paper: the *Helsingin Sonomat*, October 5, 1939, which, in the course of a leader entitled "The Position of the Baltic States," declared:

"The agreement with Germany made it possible for the U.S.S.R. to reconstruct her relations with the Baltic states. The question of guaranteeing the independence of the Baltic countries which played such an important rôle in the Anglo-French-Soviet negotiations has now been solved. The form of this solution also reduces to a minimum the danger of 'direct aggression' via the Baltic states. One cannot but note the consistency of

the foreign policy of the U.S.S.R. Instead of seeking roundabout ways, they have found a direct and smooth road to their aims."

The *Baltic Times* (Tallinn), in its issue November 4, 1939, discussing Molotov's speech of October 31, 1939, also laid special stress on the position of the Baltic countries, and said:

"During recent times, the Soviet Union has played an important part in international policy. The system of security as expressed in the treaties concluded by the U.S.S.R. with the Baltic states is of great strategic and economic importance. Co-operation for general security is of the highest value for all the contracting parties."

The Latvian journal, *Ritz*, October 12, 1939, in a special article on the Soviet-Lithuanian Agreement, declared:

"We can already now affirm that the signature of the Treaty between the U.S.S.R. and Lithuania has concluded an important stage in the history of the Baltic states. All three of these states have come to an agreement with their great eastern neighbour, obligating themselves mutually to defend their own and her frontiers. Co-operation with the Soviet Union—military, economic and cultural—will without doubt lead to further *rapprochement* between the Baltic states."

After the conclusion of the Soviet-Estonian and Soviet-Latvian Pacts, Mr. J. L. Garvin wrote:

"It took Peter the Great over twenty years to settle himself on the Baltic and open his 'windows to the west.' It took Catherine over forty years to acquire the

rest of Latvia and also Lithuania. The present master of the Kremlin is recovering all the *Baltikum* in a few weeks.

"Moscow will have controlling facilities on the main railways through Lithuania to the sea. In Latvia, at Libau and Windau—names familiar to generations of British shippers and seamen—the Soviet Power will regain ice-free ports on the open Baltic. Riga itself, though more obstructed in the winter, will become again a great Russian outlet.

"As well as the large islands of Ösel and Dagö, commanding the whole Gulf of Riga, Estonia yields the naval use of Baltiski. But just opposite lies Finland. She is to be asked for an island or two, so that Russia may guard on both sides the naval approaches to Leningrad.

"So perish the fervent Nazi dreams of Baltic domination. They hate the forfeit, but must stomach it" (*Observer*, October 8, 1939).

In a leader of the same date, the semi-official *Temps* commented: "The Russians occupy effectively all the most important strategical positions on the littoral of Estonia and Latvia which gives them the command of the greater part of the Baltic."

"Stalin's anxiety about the establishment of German power on Russia's Baltic flank," declared the *Daily Telegraph* in a leader, "is removed. The Soviet is in the way, not merely to be secure from attack from the west, but to dominate the Baltic, which becomes, not a German, but a Russian lake" (October 10, 1939).

The same journal's correspondent cabled from Moscow, October 11: "After occupying the Estonian ports and islands, Russia now possesses a splendid fairway from the naval base at Kronstadt into the Baltic Sea. By annexing the Latvian ports of Windau and Libau, she now



completes her domination of the entire northern part of the Baltic" (*Daily Telegraph*, October 12, 1939).

*The Times*, in a leader, October 14, 1939, declared:

"The German retreat from the Baltic constitutes the second main defeat of Nazi policy since the war began.

"Almost every port of any value on the Baltic between Riga and Memel will henceforth serve as a Russian naval base, Russian aerodromes will be strewn down the littoral, and leased areas will be reserved for occupation by Soviet troops. The two islands which guard the mouth of the Gulf of Riga will hold Soviet garrisons."

What happened in the Baltic was naturally closely followed by the Service departments in Great Britain: "Mr. Hore-Belisha, Secretary for War, summing up the situation yesterday at a Press conference," wrote the Military Correspondent of the *News Chronicle*, October 14, 1939, "said that in the first round of the war since the occupation of Poland, Germany had suffered a major defeat in the Baltic. The War Office, I understand, attaches considerable importance to this event. It has always been a substantial element in German strategy to dominate the Baltic Sea. Now it is dominated by Soviet Russia."

A few more words are necessary here respecting the German Balts and the Reich Germans resident in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, whom it was decided to repatriate to Germany. The total number affected has been estimated at about 100,000.

At the moment of writing, many have been repatriated, and the remainder of those desiring or compelled to go by German pressure, after all the necessary arrangements have been made, are expected to be transferred to the Reich in the course of 1940. This question is entirely

outside any Soviet-German arrangement. That fact was made clear in a statement issued by the Tass Agency on October 14, 1939, and also by the Press of the Baltic states. As one example, we may cite the *Rahvaleht*, which, in a leader on October 11, 1939, dealing with the question of the repatriation of Germans from Estonia, declared that "there was no connection whatever between the Soviet-Estonian Agreement and the departure of Germans from Estonia. This repatriation has been undertaken exclusively at the desire of the German Government." Nor, continued the journal, "is there anything in the text of the Soviet-Estonian Mutual Assistance Pact which would in any way compel Germans living in Estonia to go to Germany."

At the time of the conclusion of the Soviet Pacts with Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, the Press of this and other countries made sarcastic and cynical references to Moscow's pledge not to interfere with the structure of the social system in these little republics. All the reports which have reached London to date from correspondents and others in the Baltic area, although in some cases hesitatingly and unwillingly, bear witness to the sincere manner with which the Soviet Union is honouring its pledged word.

We have already cited what the Press of the Baltic states have said on this subject. Here we need only ask a few of the correspondents of the British Press to take the witness stand and give their evidence.

"Competent circles," cabled *The Times* Riga correspondent on October 10, 1939, "are inclined to interpret the position of Latvia and Estonia optimistically, and do not expect Soviet activities in these republics to become exceptionally embarrassing at least for some time to come" (October 11, 1939).

The *Daily Mail's* correspondent in Copenhagen cabled: "It is essential, if Russian influence is to be re-established more strongly in the Baltic than it was in Tsarist days, that the Baltic countries be left peaceful and satisfied behind the Soviet's new defensive bases. In this Russia seems to be succeeding" (*Daily Mail*, October 21, 1939).

"According to information received in London," wrote the Diplomatic Correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* (November 2, 1939), "the discipline of the Russian troops who evacuated Vilna to be replaced by the Lithuanians was excellent. . . . The discipline amongst the Russian troops and naval ratings in Estonia also appears to be very good."

The *Daily Telegraph's* correspondent cabled from Tallinn, November 3, 1939:

"Soviet troops are billeted in fixed regions pending the construction of bases and are thus completely out of sight. Confidence for the future prevails everywhere and economic and cultural development continue as before" (November 4, 1939).

In earlier pages we gave a few quotations showing the attitude of the Soviet Press to these Pacts. An authoritative statement on the subject was made by V. M. Molotov when he spoke at the special session of the Supreme Council of the U.S.S.R., October 31, 1939. He declared to the world that his Government had honoured and would honour their word to the Baltic states, and said:

"The special character of these Mutual Assistance Pacts in no way implies any interference of the Soviet Union in the affairs of Estonia, Latvia or Lithuania, as some foreign newspapers are trying to make out. On the contrary, all these Pacts of Mutual Assistance strictly stipulate the inviolability of the sovereignty of

the signatory states and the principle of non-interference in each other's affairs. The Pacts are based on mutual respect for the political, social and economic structure of the contracting parties and are designed to strengthen the bases for peaceful, neighbourly co-operation between our peoples. We stand for the scrupulous and punctilious observance of the Pacts on the basis of complete reciprocity, and we declare that all the spreading of the nonsense about Sovietising the Baltic countries is only to the interest of our common enemies and of all anti-Soviet *provocateurs*."

These states, pointed out M. Molotov, would gain immense economic benefits from their Pacts with the U.S.S.R. As a result of the Trade Agreements, trade between the Baltic states and Soviet Russia would increase several times and in general the *rapprochement* reached would "contribute to a more rapid progress of their agriculture, industry and transport, and, in general, to the national well-being of our Baltic neighbours."

Also these states will be far better protected than in the past from outside attack. M. Molotov went on:

"In view of the special geographical position of these countries, which are in a way approaches to the U.S.S.R., particularly from the Baltic, these Pacts allow the Soviet Union to maintain naval bases and aerodromes in specified parts of Estonia and Latvia and, in the case of the Pact with Lithuania, provides for the defence of the Lithuanian borders jointly with the Soviet Union.

"The creation of these Soviet naval bases and aerodromes on the territory of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania and the stationing of a certain number of Red Army units to protect these bases and aerodromes, ensure a reliable defence base, not only for the Soviet Union, but also for the Baltic states themselves, and thereby



contribute to the preservation of peace, which is to the interest of our peoples."

Finally, M. Molotov paid a tribute to the goodwill and earnest desire for peace and friendly, neighbourly relations shown by all concerned in the negotiations for the Pacts of Mutual Assistance.

Cynics may sneer, but, as has invariably happened in the past in connection with the Soviet Union, they will prove to be bad prophets. We confidently predict that, with the passing of the weeks, months and years, there will be a greater feeling of security, coupled with an advance in material prosperity and culture in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, than these little states have experienced in their long and troubled histories.

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### THE U.S.S.R. AND FINLAND

BEFORE considering the abortive negotiations in Moscow between representatives of the Soviet and Finnish Governments, it will be worth while to recall the attitude of the Allied Governments and the Russian "White" Generals in 1919 towards the Finnish claim for complete independence.

On a previous page we referred to the Notes exchanged between the Allied Governments and Admiral Koltchak on the subject of the three Baltic states. Respecting the question of the independence of Finland, Koltchak's note in reply to the Allied Governments stated: "We are disposed at once to recognise the *de facto* Government of Finland, but the final solution of the Finnish question

must belong to the constituent Assembly." Note the words "*de facto*"—not "*de jure*." There was no pledge to recognise Finland *de jure* as a sovereign independent state within her then existing frontiers.

It is impossible to believe—and the Allied Governments at that time were well aware of the fact, and so was the Finnish Government—that a Russian Government under the control of Koltchak would ever have allowed the complete separation of Finland from Russia. At most they would have granted Finland a large measure of self-government, but they would certainly have insisted on the occupation by Russian troops of all strategic bases on Finnish territory.

Yet the Allied Governments, as we pointed out on an earlier page, regarded Koltchak's reply as satisfactory. The fact is that Finland offers one of the best *place d'armes* for an attack on Russia. This was clearly recognised when that was a burning question in 1919, during the period of foreign armed intervention in Soviet Russia.

For example, *The Times* of April 17, 1919, published a lengthy article "from a correspondent," which declared:

"If we look at the map, we shall find that the best approach to Petrograd is from the Baltic, and that the shortest and easiest route is through Finland, whose frontiers are only about thirty miles distant from the Russian capital. Finland is the key to Petrograd and Petrograd is the key to Moscow."

Geography has not changed since 1919, and twenty years later somewhat similar ideas were being canvassed in Berlin and elsewhere.

It may be added that, as in the case of the Baltic states, so in that of Finland, the Soviet Government, when recognising the independent sovereignty of Finland,

realised perfectly well that so long as Soviet Russia did not possess or did not have the use of certain strategic points on the islands and mainland of Finland, the latter could and would be used when opportunity occurred as a jumping-off ground for an attack upon her. The way in which the capitalist Powers regarded Finland, without any reference to the interests of Soviet Russia, is illustrated by their action in 1921, when, without consulting or inviting the participation of the Soviet Government, the ten countries—Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Poland, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Great Britain, France and Italy—signed a convention forbidding the fortification of the Aaland Islands. Speaking of this fact, M. Molotov, in his speech, May 31, 1939, declared:

"In 1921 the Soviet Republic, undermined by war and foreign intervention, could only protest against this illegal act towards the U.S.S.R., but even then it was clearly and repeatedly declared by us that the Soviet Union could not stand aloof from this question, and that any change in the juridical status of the Aaland Islands to the detriment of the interests of our country was impermissible."

Turning to the strategic importance of the Aaland Islands so far as the U.S.S.R. was concerned, M. Molotov said:

"The importance of the Aaland Islands lies in their position in the Baltic. Armaments on the Aaland Islands may be utilised for purposes hostile to the U.S.S.R. Situated as they are near the entrance to the Gulf of Finland, armed Aaland Islands could be used to close to the U.S.S.R. all the entrances into and the outlets from the Gulf of Finland."

In January, 1939, the Finnish and Swedish Governments reached an agreement for a joint refortification of

these islands, and communicated with all the signatories of the 1921 Aaland Convention, but only notified their decision to the Soviet requesting the agreement of the latter. A most tactless procedure, to say the least, seeing that the U.S.S.R. was vitally interested. All the signatories, including Germany, agreed; naturally enough, Germany agreed, as, in all probability, she had herself instigated the move by Finland and Sweden.

A special correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* cabled from The Hague:

"I know from my trip in the Baltic this year that it was Germany who advised the Finns to fortify the Aaland Islands and advised Estonia to fortify the islands of Dagö and Ösel—a scheme which was in preparation and which was intended by the Germans to bottle up Russia in the Gulf of Finland. The Germans devised a scheme of defences for Finland under which Leningrad might have been threatened and with it important Russian industries like the Putilov Works near Leningrad."

"Using Germany's preoccupation in the west," rightly reasoned the correspondent, "Soviet Russia has now turned the tables and she is now seeking safety for Leningrad" (*Manchester Guardian*, November 6, 1939).

In passing, it is worthy of note that it was revealed in the course of the session of the League Council at which this question was discussed that "the Aaland Islanders have protested against the refortification of the islands" (*Manchester Guardian*, May 29, 1939, from their Geneva correspondent).

When the matter came before the League, M. Maisky, on behalf of the Soviet Government, opposed the Finnish-Swedish proposal. M. Maisky pointed out that the U.S.S.R. was interested in the question of the Aaland



Islands, not only as a Great European Power, not only as a member of the League of Nations, but also as a state bordering on the Finnish Gulf. Consequently, the U.S.S.R. could not but pay very special attention to the question of their fortification.

"The Aaland Islands," continued M. Maisky, "could be used to bottle up the Soviet Union in the Gulf of Finland. . . ."

"The Soviet Union did not know what the purpose of the fortifications was, the extent of the proposed fortifications, against whom they were to be built and, above all, what guarantees there were that an aggressive Power would not occupy and utilise these fortifications against the U.S.S.R. The Soviet Government was studying these questions and had not completed the study. In its opinion a precipitate decision was not desirable and would complicate the international situation and thereby tend to endanger the general peace."

Consequently, the Soviet Government considered that the decision should be postponed.

Should the matter be put to the vote, the Soviet Government, said M. Maisky, would vote against the plan of Sweden and Finland. However, no vote was taken, and thereupon the President announced that the Council had taken no decision on the question.

Underlining M. Maisky's preoccupations, the *Manchester Guardian's* report declared: "What the Soviet Government is afraid of, as Mr. Maisky's statement yesterday showed, is that Finland and Sweden would not be strong enough to prevent Germany from seizing the fortified islands. If Germany succeeded in seizing them in the event of war, it would be a serious matter for the Soviet Union and its allies."



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## RUSSIA, FINLAND AND THE BALTIC

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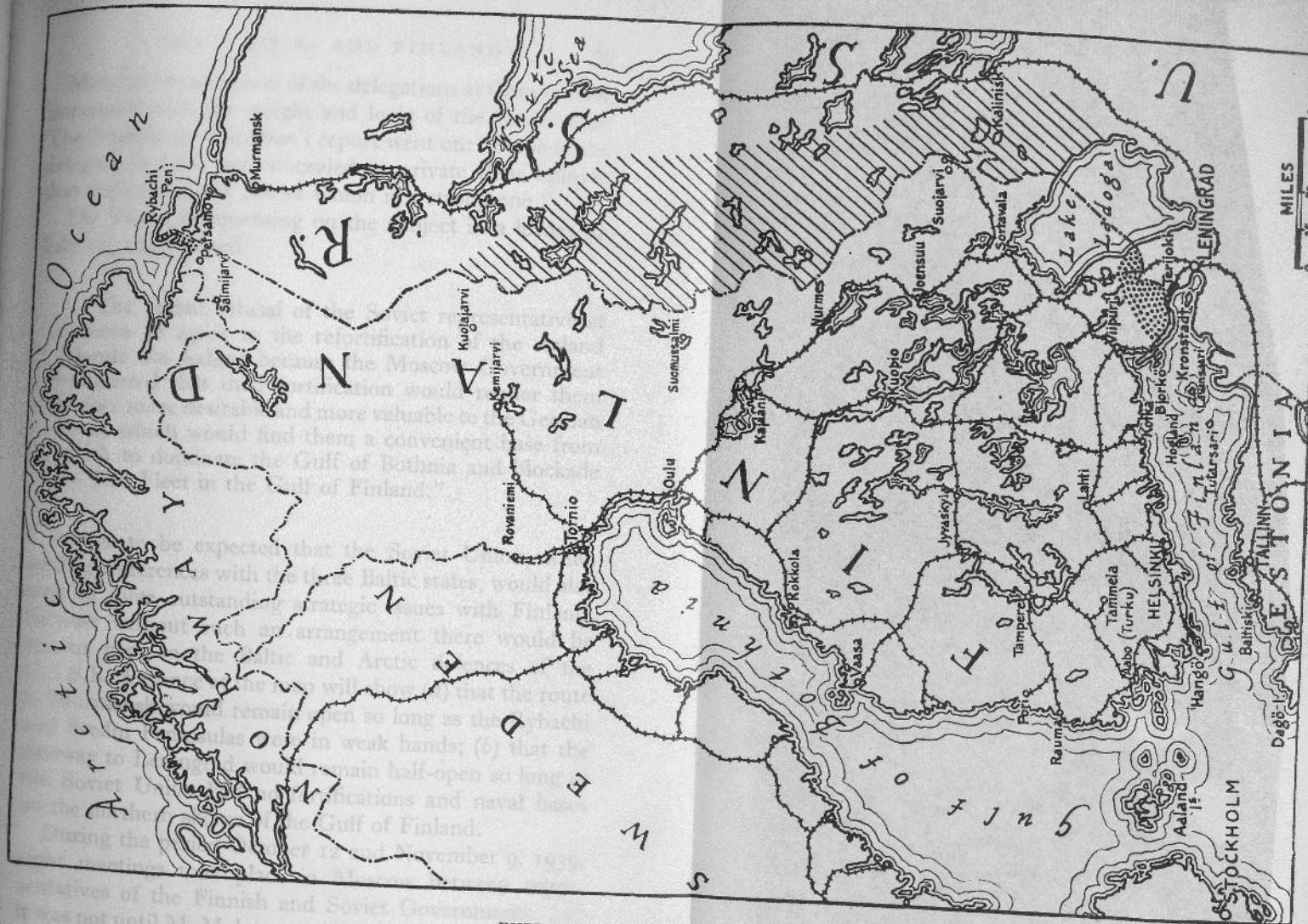
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### EXPLANATORY NOTE

The provisions of the Mutual Assistance Treaty between the Government of the U.S.S.R. and the Provisional People's Government of the Finnish Democratic Republic, in so far as they concern the transference of land, are as follows: The Peninsula of Hangö and the surrounding waters within a radius of five miles to the south and east and three miles to the west and north, as well as the adjoining islands in the south and east, are to be leased to the U.S.S.R. for thirty years for the establishment of a naval base; for the protection of the latter, the U.S.S.R. is to have the right to maintain there, at her own expense, a strictly limited number of land and air forces.

The U.S.S.R. buys the islands of Hogland, Summarö, Lavansaari, Tytärsaari and Kojivisto (Björkö) in the Gulf of Finland, also the part of Rybachy and Sredny Peninsulas belonging to Finland; the U.S.S.R. to pay Finland 300,000,000 Finnish marks.

The U.S.S.R. transfers to Finland 70,000 square kilometres of Soviet Karelia with a mainly Karelian population. The Finnish Democratic Republic agrees to move the Finnish frontier on the Karelian Isthmus northward from Leningrad, and to transfer to the U.S.S.R. 3,970 square kilometres of territory; the Soviet Government agrees to compensate Finland for the loss of railways in the section of Karelia transferred to the U.S.S.R. and for this purpose will pay Finland 120,000,000 Finnish marks.

"Any impartial person must admit, however, that the same problems concerning the security of the Soviet Union, and particularly of Leningrad, which figures in the negotiations with Estonia also figure in the negotiations with Finland. In a certain sense, it may be said that in this case the problem of the Soviet Union's security is even more acute, inasmuch as Leningrad, which after Moscow is the most important city of the Soviet state, is situated at a distance of only thirty-two kilometres from the Finnish border. This means that the distance of Leningrad from the border of a foreign state is less than that required for modern long-range guns to shell it. On the other hand, the approaches to Leningrad from the sea also depend to a large extent on whether Finland, which owns the entire northern shore of the Gulf of Finland and all the islands along the central part of the Gulf of Finland, is hostile or friendly towards the Soviet Union."

M. Molotov dwelt on the fact that the Soviet Government, recognising the principle of the right to free development of all nations, had of its own free will ensured the "separate and independent existence" of Finland. "None but the Soviet Government in Russia," exclaimed M. Molotov, "could tolerate the existence of an independent Finland at the very gates of Leningrad. This is eloquently testified by Finland's experience with the 'democratic' government of Kerensky and Tsereteli, not to mention the government of Prince Lvov and Milyukov, let alone the Tsarist Government."

Turning to the subject matter of the Soviet-Finnish negotiations, M. Molotov declared:

"It is not difficult to see that in the present state of international affairs, when in the centre of Europe war is developing between some of the biggest states—war

fraught with great surprises and dangers for all European states—the Soviet Union is not only entitled but obliged to adopt serious measures to increase its security. It is natural for the Soviet Government to display particular concern with regard to the Gulf of Finland, which is the approach to Leningrad from the sea, and also with regard to the land border which dominates Leningrad some thirty kilometres away."

The Soviet Government were not intransigent in their negotiations with Finland. At first they suggested the conclusion of a Soviet-Finnish pact on approximately the same lines as the Mutual Assistance Pacts which the U.S.S.R. had concluded with the Baltic states, but when the Finnish Government replied that such a pact would be in contradiction with the position of "neutrality" which they wished to maintain, the Soviet Government agreed to drop this proposal. M. Molotov outlined the alternative proposals then made by the Soviet Government. These proposals being of great importance for an understanding of the case, we give here the relevant passage in M. Molotov's speech in full:

"We have proposed that an agreement be reached to shift the Soviet-Finnish frontier on the Isthmus of Karelia several dozen kilometres further to the north of Leningrad. In exchange for this, we have proposed to transfer to Finland a part of Soviet Karelia, double the size of the territory which Finland would transfer to the Soviet Union.

"We have further proposed that an agreement be reached for Finland to lease to us for a definite term a small section of her territory near the entrance to the Gulf of Finland<sup>1</sup> where we might establish a naval base. With a Soviet naval base at the southern entrance to the Gulf of Finland—namely, at Baltiski port, as

<sup>1</sup> M. Molotov is here referring to the port of Hangö.



provided for by the Soviet-Estonian Pact of Mutual Assistance—the establishment of a naval base at the northern entrance to the Gulf of Finland would fully safeguard the Gulf of Finland against hostile attempts on the part of other states. We have no doubt that the establishment of such a base would not only be in the interests of the Soviet Union, but also of the security of Finland herself.

“Our other proposals, in particular our proposal as regards the exchange of certain islands in the Gulf of Finland, as well as parts of Rybachi and Sredni Peninsulas, for territory twice as large in Soviet Karelia, evidently do not meet with any objections on the part of the Finnish Government. Differences with regard to certain of our proposals have not been overcome, and concessions made by Finland in this respect—as, for instance, the cession of part of the territory of the Isthmus of Karelia—obviously do not meet the purpose.

“We have, further, made a number of new steps to meet Finland halfway. We declared that if our main proposals were accepted we should be prepared to drop our objections to the fortification of the Aaland Islands, on which the Finnish Government has been insisting for a long time. We only made one stipulation: we said that we would drop our objection to the fortification of the Aaland Islands on condition that the fortification is done by Finland's own national forces without participation of any third country, inasmuch as the U.S.S.R. will take no part in it.

“We have also proposed to Finland the disarming of the fortified zones along the entire Soviet-Finnish border on the Isthmus of Karelia, which should fully accord with the interests of Finland. We have further expressed our desire to reinforce the Soviet-Finnish Pact of Non-Aggression with additional mutual guarantees. Lastly, the consolidation of Soviet-Finnish political relations would undoubtedly form a splendid basis for

the rapid development of economic relations between the two countries. Thus we are ready to meet Finland in matters in which she is particularly interested.”

On December 12, the Helsinki Government published a White Paper setting out the Soviet proposals and the Finnish counter-proposals. There is no material difference between the terms set out in that document and the disclosures made by M. Molotov in the above speech.

Details of the strategic importance to the U.S.S.R. of the Soviet claims was given in a lengthy article in the *Red Fleet* of November 12, 1939. As this article may be of considerable interest to many of our readers, we give a lengthy summary of it at the end of this section.

It is significant that the Soviet proposals were recognised by important sections of the Press of this country, albeit grudgingly, as actuated by strategical considerations of defence. Thus, the *Manchester Guardian*, November 14, 1939, editorially admitted: “Russia's first object is to make herself impregnable in the eastern Baltic, whatever the cost to the states along its shores; in dealing with them, the argument has been that of strength against weakness.”

*The Times*, November 14, 1939, in a leader, averred:

“The crucial Russian proposal, according to the Soviet Press, was that Finland should hand over on lease such territory adjoining the port of Hangö as would enable the Russians to plant long-range guns there, which, in conjunction with the guns of the island of Dagö, already in Soviet hands, would command the whole width—forty-five miles—of the entrance to the Gulf.”

The Soviet proposals, under the circumstances, did not apparently appear unreasonable to the leader-writer: “If the determination of the U.S.S.R. to be complete master

of all the eastern Baltic," continued the article, "is not seeking of power for its own sake—and 'imperialism' is understood to be a cardinal negation of Soviet doctrine—then it is obvious that there can only be one state against which precautions are necessary. The demand for security, whether against a fleet entering the Gulf of Finland or an army advancing from, or through, Finnish territory, takes its place in close relation with the policy that required the evacuation of the Baltic republics by their subjects of German blood."

The *Yorkshire Post*, November 13, 1939, editorially commented:

"The claim for a foothold on the mainland at Hangö is justified on the ground that in conjunction with the island of Dagö, which has been leased from Estonia, it would give Russia command over the entrance to the Gulf of Finland. Strategically, the argument needs no emphasis. Nor can any European nation feel wholly out of sympathy with Russia's determination to safeguard herself from German hostile action in the future."

And the *Spectator*, November 17, 1939, after having had extra time for mature consideration, declared:

"Russia's 'need' for the concessions demanded can easily be understood by a glance at the map. The Gulf of Finland may be regarded as being to Russia what the Dardanelles and the Sea of Marmora are to Turkey, with Leningrad substituted for Istanbul. Russia, having secured her hold on the southern shores and the approaches to them by her new positions in Estonia, demands a series of similar positions for fortification on the northern shore at the expense of Finland. To these demands she adds one more on the Arctic (not affecting Germany) with a view to the 'security' of Murmansk. One can easily appreciate Russia's desire

for these commanding positions. They have a real relation to what is understood as security."

In fairness to the writers in all four of the above journals, we must add, although recognising that the Soviet Union was acting under the compulsion of imperative strategical considerations, they all expressed deep sympathy with Finland. We would only add one comment, viz. promptings of the heart must be subordinated to the conclusions of the head when strategical questions, based on the facts of unalterable geography and also of history, are under consideration.

The negotiations having reached deadlock, the Finnish delegation left Moscow on November 13, 1939, and arrived at Helsinki two days later. A few hours after their return Dr. Paasikivi (the head of the delegation) gave an interview to the Press which was thus summed up by *The Times* correspondent:

"Russia had made certain proposals for the revision of the frontier and for the acquisition of a naval base against compensation, and Finland had taken her stand. There would be no solution in part, as both sides were resolved to view the issue as a whole. *Russia treated the entire question from the military point of view; Finland considered Hangö as a vital interest.*

"Dr. Paasikivi repeated that the talks had been conducted throughout in a very amicable atmosphere" (November 16, 1939. Our italics).

Throughout the negotiations the Finnish authorities insisted that the Soviet proposals would mean interference with their internal social structure; that they would defend their territory against any attack, from whatever quarter it came; that they would not permit Finnish territory to be used for an attack on the U.S.S.R.



*Industria*, November 16, 1939, pointedly replied: "Despite the distortion of the reactionary American and European Press, the Soviet demands do not involve any infringement of Finland's territorial integrity and sovereignty. We cannot allow Leningrad, the second greatest city in the Soviet Union, to be menaced from land, sea and air." Further, the journal pointed out that Finland was too weak to resist the pressure of any great Power to use her territory as a war base against the U.S.S.R.

Flag-Admiral Tributz, Commander of the Baltic Fleet, in an article in *Izvestia*, November 21, 1939, threw further light on the reason for the Soviet proposals. After stressing that the Finnish ports had been used by the British Fleet during the period of foreign armed intervention in Russia, and that the Soviet Union's Baltic Fleet had grown enormously in recent years and now possessed battleships, many cruisers, submarines, mine-layers, flying-boats, the Admiral added: "The Soviet Baltic Fleet is ready to act at any moment and is awaiting the Government's orders. No obstacle will baulk our determination to establish a solid peace in the Gulf of Finland, to forestall any surprises by aggressors, and to secure Leningrad and the Soviet borders as well as the borders of our friendly neighbours."

Admiral Tributz went on to demand an outlet to the central Baltic for Soviet Russia and added: "We feel too crowded at the extreme end of the Gulf of Finland."

The Finnish Prime Minister, M. Cajander, for the first time since the return of the Finnish delegation from Moscow, broke silence at a public meeting, November 23, 1939, when he declared:

"The Great War had shattered the Tsarist régime, on the ruins of which the Soviet Union had arisen. The

Soviet Union recognised the right of peoples to self-determination, gave assurances of its desire to maintain peaceful neighbourly relations and recognised Finnish independence. During the Great War Germany had accorded Finland unforgettable help. The Russo-German Pact had destroyed the idea that these two nations were irreconcilable. Germany had previously been the only Power who could possibly threaten Leningrad, and this danger was now non-existent.

"The acquisition by Russia from Finland of naval and air bases, in addition to those she already has at Liepaja, Ventspils, Ösel, Dagö and Baltiski port, would permit Soviet domination of the Baltic.

"The Finnish Government therefore see no possibility of accepting the latest Russian proposals, as acceptance would be a violation of Finnish neutrality and a weakening of Finnish defences. It would mean the transfer to a foreign Power of first-class fortifications" (*Yorkshire Post*, November 24, 1939).

This statement calls for a few comments. It was the Soviet Government and not the Provisional Government which granted Finland the right to secede and recognised her independence, but this did not safeguard Soviet Russia later from being menaced by foreign forces operating from Finnish territory.

It is, of course, true that the Soviet Government had signed a Pact of Non-Aggression and Friendship with the present German Government. Undoubtedly, so far as the Soviet Government is concerned, they hope that this treaty will ensure prolonged peace between Germany and the Soviet Union. But we all know that treaties, as indeed also governments, are by no means eternal. Surely there have been sufficient examples, both in recent and also in past history, to make this quite self-evident. Moreover,

as the only Socialist country in the world, the U.S.S.R. has many potential enemies.

It is not true to say, as the series of events in the Baltic recorded in previous pages demonstrate, that Germany is the only Power that could threaten Leningrad. As already noted, there was joint Anglo-French-German co-operation against Soviet Russia in the Baltic states in 1919, and, in justice to their own people, the Soviet Government must take every necessary step to guard themselves against a repetition of that criminal enterprise.

It is true that Soviet control of naval and air bases on Finnish territory would mean Soviet control of the Gulf of Finland and the eastern Baltic, but Soviet Russia, as the largest Baltic state, has the greatest claim to that control, and she has unequivocally pledged herself not to violate the internal social structure of these states. It is true that the acceptance of the Soviet claims would have weakened Finnish defences *vis-à-vis* the Soviet Union, but it would have strengthened Finnish defences as against any other state. In any case, the previous peaceful occupation or non-occupation of these bases would not have been a decisive factor in the event of a Russian-Finnish conflict. As the *Spectator* had truly remarked: "The fact that the construction of a Russian naval base ('defensive' in character) on one of the islands in the Gulf of Finland would put Helsinki, and indeed all Finland, at Russia's mercy is less serious than it sounds, for Finland is obviously at Russia's mercy in any case" (*Spectator*, October 27, 1939).

An unfortunate incident occurred on the Finnish-Soviet frontier on the afternoon of November 26, 1939. To quote the communiqué issued by the Leningrad Military Area:

"At 3.45 p.m. to-day artillery fire was suddenly opened from Finnish territory against Soviet troops

stationed one kilometre north-west of Mainil. Altogether seven shells were fired by the Finns. Three Red Army men and one junior commander were killed, and seven Red Army men, one junior commander, and one junior lieutenant were wounded."

The same evening, the Soviet Government handed the following Note to the Finnish Minister in Moscow:

"According to a report from the General Staff of the Red Army, on November 26, at 3.45 p.m., artillery fire was suddenly opened from Finnish territory against Soviet troops stationed near the village of Mainil, on the Karelian Isthmus, near the Finnish border. Altogether seven cannon shots were fired, as the result of which three rank and file and one junior commander were killed, seven rank and file and two commanders being wounded.

"Soviet troops, having strict orders not to yield to any provocation, refrained from returning the fire. . . ."

After pointing out the danger of the concentration of large numbers of regular troops on the border near Leningrad and characterising the shelling as a hostile act towards the U.S.S.R. the note continued:

"The Soviet Government is not inclined to magnify this abominable act of attack on the part of the Finnish troops—probably badly managed by the Finnish command. But it expresses the hope that such abominable incidents should not take place in future.

"The Soviet Government, therefore, while resolutely protesting against everything that happened, proposes that the Government of Finland withdraws its troops without delay twenty to twenty-five kilometres [twelve to sixteen miles] farther from the border on the Karelian



Isthmus, thus preventing the possibility of repeated provocations."

To this the Finnish Government replied in a Note on the evening of November 27, 1939, in which they averred:

"The Finnish Government denies that the shots were fired from the Finnish side. Consequently, it is my duty to reject the Soviet Government's protest, and to declare that no hostile act against the Soviet Union has been committed.

"On the Finnish side, it was possible to see the explosions of the seven alleged shots, which were fired from guns on the Soviet side 1,500 yards from the place of the explosion."

The Note expressed the willingness of the Finnish Government to negotiate a withdrawal of troops twelve miles from the frontiers on a mutual basis. To effect such a withdrawal, the Finnish Government proposed the establishment of a joint commission to act in accordance with the Soviet-Finnish Frontier Convention of September 24, 1928.

In the meantime passions were rising and incidents on the Soviet-Finnish frontier were multiplying. On the evening of November 28, 1939, the military authorities of Leningrad reported: "At 5 p.m. Finnish soldiers opened fire on a troop of Soviet soldiers. The Finns entered Soviet territory. They were pursued and three Finns were taken prisoners. Then at 6 p.m. from the Finnish side fire was opened on Soviet soldiers, who did not reply with shots, despite the fact that bullets fell about 200 yards inside Soviet territory. Then a troop of Finns tried to cross the frontier. Soviet troops opened

fire with rifles and machine-guns and the Finns retreated" (*Daily Telegraph*, November 29, 1939).

"According to another report," stated the Moscow correspondent of the *Daily Telegraph*, "the Finns fired two artillery salvos." The Finnish authorities, of course, denied these reports. But in view of the fact that similar incidents had been happening from time to time on the Finnish-Soviet border during the last twenty years, we see no reason to doubt the authenticity of the Soviet reports.

Events now moved rapidly, and on the evening of November 28, 1939, the Soviet Government, in reply to the Finnish Note, denounced the 1932 Soviet-Finnish Non-Aggression Pact on the ground that Finland had already violated it. The Soviet Note to Finland on this subject, according to the *Daily Telegraph*, November 29, 1939, fell "into three parts. First, Finland's denial of the shooting is described as an attempt to mislead the public and deride the victims of the incident. Only this could explain Finland's wish to make the incident appear as the result of a Soviet military exercise, which is alleged to have occurred in front of a Finnish frontier post.

"Secondly, Finland's refusal to withdraw troops from the frontier unless Moscow does the same is attributed to a hostile desire to keep Leningrad under menace. The position as between the two countries' frontier forces is not one of equality, it is stated, because:

" 'The Soviet troops do not menace the vital centres of Finland, because they are hundreds of miles from those centres, while the Finnish troops, stationed twenty miles from Leningrad—a vital centre of the Soviet Union with a population of 3,500,000—created an immediate threat to it.'

"How, it is asked, could the Soviet withdraw their troops as the Finns suggest? To do so would be to withdraw them into the suburbs of Leningrad.

"This would create an absurd situation and imperil Leningrad further. It is clear that Finland, while rejecting the Soviet proposal, is bearing in mind the idea of continuing to keep Leningrad under the threat of her troops.'

"Thirdly, it is stated that by concentrating large forces of regular troops near Leningrad and thus placing under immediate threat a very important and vital centre of the Soviet Union, 'the Finnish Government has committed a hostile act against the Soviet Union which is incompatible with the Non-Aggression Pact concluded between the two countries.'

"Moreover, by refusing to withdraw its own troops for at least twelve to sixteen miles after the 'villainous shelling of Soviet troops,' the Finnish Government has shown that it continues to:

"Maintain a hostile attitude towards the U.S.S.R., does not intend to pay regard to the provisions of the Non-Aggression Pact, and has decided to keep Leningrad under threat in the future also.'

"From to-day, therefore, the Soviet Government considers itself free from the obligations of the Non-Aggression Pact, 'which has been systematically violated by the Finnish Government.' "

The denunciation of the Pact was followed by General Mannerheim signing an order for general mobilisation late on the night of November 28, 1939, and the Finnish Cabinet sat until midnight to consider its reply. But before the latter was handed to Moscow, the Soviet Government,

having come to the conclusion that further negotiations with the Helsinki Government were useless, decided, on November 29, 1939, to break off relations with this Government. At midnight of the same day, M. Molotov announced this decision in a radio speech, in the course of which he dwelt on the hostile attitude of the Finnish Government towards the U.S.S.R. and to the fact that the negotiations on the proposals which "in the present alarming international situation," the Soviet Government "regarded as the minimum essential for ensuring the security of our country and especially for the security of Leningrad," had broken down as a result of the intransigence of the Finnish Government which, said M. Molotov, had taken this course "to please foreign imperialists who instigate this hostility towards the Soviet Union."

M. Molotov next referred to the losses suffered by the Red Army as a result of the incidents on the Soviet-Finnish border, and declared that the Finnish Government had met with hostility the attempts of the Soviet Government to forestall a repetition of such incidents.

"All this," continued M. Molotov, "had definitely shown that the present Government of Finland, which has become entangled in its anti-Soviet ties with the imperialists, does not wish to maintain normal relations with the Soviet Union. It continues in its hostile attitude towards our country and does not wish to pay any regard to the provisions of the Non-Aggression Pact concluded between our countries, but is desiring to keep our glorious Leningrad under military threat. From such a Government and from its thoughtless military clique we can now expect only fresh insolent provocation."

Accordingly, since, said M. Molotov, the Government of Finland had violated the Soviet-Finnish Non-Aggression Pact, the Soviet Government now also



regarded itself free from all obligations under that Pact. Further, in view of the fresh Finnish attacks on Soviet troops, "the Government of the U.S.S.R. arrived at the conclusion that it can no longer maintain normal relations with the Government of Finland. . . . Along with this, the Government gave orders to the Chief Command of the Red Army and Navy to be ready for any surprise and immediately check possible fresh sallies on the part of the Finnish military clique."

M. Molotov denied absolutely that the Soviet Government had any intention whatever to annex Finland to the U.S.S.R. or to interfere with her independent sovereignty. He insisted that "if Finland herself pursued a friendly policy towards the Soviet Union, the Soviet Government, which always strove for friendly relations with Finland, would be ready to meet her halfway in regard to territorial concessions on the part of the U.S.S.R."

"Under this condition, the Soviet Government would be ready to consider favourably even such a question as that of reuniting the Karelian people inhabiting the main districts at present in Soviet Karelia with kindred Finnish people in a single and independent Finnish state. For this, however, it is necessary that the Government of Finland should maintain, not a hostile, but a friendly attitude towards the U.S.S.R. which would correspond to the vital interests of both states."

After again stressing that the Soviet Government regarded Finland as an independent state, both in regard to her home and foreign policy, M. Molotov concluded: "The Soviet Union has equally no intention to prejudice in any way the interests of other states in Finland. The questions of relations between Finland and other states form a matter for the exclusive concern of Finland herself and the Soviet Union does not consider itself entitled to

interfere in this matter. The only purpose of our measures is to ensure the security of the Soviet Union, and especially Leningrad, with its population of 3,500,000.

"In the present international atmosphere heated by war we cannot make a solution of this vital and urgent State problem dependent on the ill will of the present Finnish rulers. This problem will have to be solved by the efforts of the Soviet Union itself in friendly co-operation with the Finnish people. We have no doubt that the favourable solution of the problem of ensuring the security of Leningrad will provide the foundation of indestructible friendship between the U.S.S.R. and Finland."

After this, events followed fast. Hostilities assumed a larger scale; at the same time the Cajander Government of Finland fell in the early morning of December 1, and a new Helsinki Government, with M. Ryti as Premier and M. Tanner as Minister for Foreign Affairs, took its place. From the Soviet point of view, this was no improvement, since, so M. Molotov averred, the Soviet-Finnish negotiations had broken down largely as a result of the attitude adopted by M. Tanner. In the meantime, on December 1, 1939, a Provisional People's Government was formed in Terijoki, Eastern Finland. This Government, in the course of a proclamation to the Finnish people, said:

"The people have already risen in various parts of the country and proclaimed the formation of a democratic republic. A part of the soldiers of the Finnish Army have already sided with the new Government, backed by the people.

"The Soviet Union, which has never threatened or disturbed Finland, which always respected her independence and for some twenty years tolerated a vile war of provocations on the part of the adventurist rulers

of White Finland, has now been confronted with the necessity of putting an end to these threats to its independence by means of the Red Army forces.

"The People's Government of Finland, being deeply convinced that the Soviet Union pursues no aims directed against the independence of our country, fully approves and supports the actions of the Red Army on the territory of Finland. It regards them as an invaluable assistance to the Finnish people on the part of the Soviet Union for the purpose of eliminating as soon as possible, by joint efforts, the most dangerous seat of war created in Finland by the criminal government of war *provocateurs*."

The proclamation further declared: "Our state must be a democratic republic serving the interests of the people, unlike the plutocratic Republic of Cajander and Erkko, which served the interests of the capitalists and landlords. However, our state is not a state of the Soviet type because the Soviet régime cannot be established by the efforts of the Government alone, without the consent of the whole people—in particular, the peasantry.

"The People's Government in its present composition regards itself as a provisional government. Immediately upon the arrival in Helsinki, capital of the country, it will be reorganised and its composition enlarged by the inclusion of representatives of various parties and groups participating in the people's front of toilers. The final composition of the People's Government, its powers and actions, are to be sanctioned by a Diet elected on the basis of universal equal direct suffrage by secret ballot.

"The People's Government of Finland regards as its primary task the overthrow of the Government of the Finnish White Guards, the rout of its armed forces, the conclusion of peace, and the ensuring of the independence

and security of Finland by means of establishing lasting friendly relations with the Soviet Union."

Finally, the proclamation gave the following as its chief items of home policy:

"The creation of a People's Army of Finland.

"The establishment of State control over large private banks and large industrial enterprises and realisation of measures for assisting medium and petty enterprises.

"The realisation of measures for the complete elimination of unemployment.

"The reduction of the working day to eight hours, with a provision for two weeks' summer holidays for workers and a reduction in house rents for workers and employees.

"The confiscation of the lands belonging to big landowners, without touching the lands and properties of the peasants, and the transference of the confiscated land to peasants having no land or possessing small allotments.

"The exemption of peasants from the payment of tax.

"State assistance in every form for the improvement of the farms of the poor peasants, in the first place by allotting to them additional land, pastures and, when possible, also forests for their domestic needs, from lands confiscated from large landowners.

"The democratisation of the State organisation, administration and courts.

"The increase of State subsidies for the cultural needs and the reorganisation of schools; to ensure the possibility of the attendance at schools to children of workers and other needy people, also assistance in every form for the development of public education, science, literature and arts in a progressive spirit."

The Soviet Government recognised the Terijoki People's Government as the Government of Finland and



on December 2, 1939, concluded with it a Mutual Assistance Pact whereby the two countries undertook to render each other assistance, "including military, in the event of an attack or threat of an attack on Finland, and also in the event of an attack or threat of an attack on the Soviet Union across the territory of Finland on the part of any European Power." They also undertook not to conclude any alliances and not to participate in any coalitions directed against one of the contracting parties . . . . . and the Soviet Union undertook "to render the People's Army of Finland assistance in armaments and other war materials on favourable terms."

The Treaty also envisaged the subsequent conclusion of a trade agreement. For the rest the Treaty included substantially the Soviet proposals made to the Helsinki Government with which we have already dealt.

Since the formation and Soviet recognition of the Provisional People's Government of Finland, the Soviet Government has refused to have any dealings with the Helsinki Government, which the Soviet Government contended could no longer speak for Finland. Accordingly, the Soviet Government has refused any mediation between itself and the Helsinki Government whether by the U.S.A., the League of Nations or any other would-be mediators. As for the Red Army operating in Finland, the Soviet Government now contended that it was merely carrying out the terms of its Mutual Assistance Agreement with the Terijoki Government.

The Soviet action in Finland has been roundly condemned as an act of Soviet imperialism, as a wanton act of aggression on the part of a big totalitarian Power on a small, "gallant little democracy," and General Mannerheim has been acclaimed as the "Liberator" of Finland. It would be as well, therefore, to give a rapid outline of

the history and nature of this much praised Finnish democracy.

As a subject nationality of the Russian Empire before the Revolution, Finland had to bear her share of oppression which was the lot of all the nationalities in that Empire.

During the 1914-18 World War, Tsarist oppression in Finland became even stronger, although the Tsarist Government dared not use Finnish soldiers in their Army. The struggle for independence among the Finns became more determined. Seeking help, two tendencies manifested themselves; one looked to Britain and France, hoping that after their victory over Germany they would exert pressure on the Tsar to grant Finland, if not independence, at least real autonomy; the other—and this was by far the most powerful section—looked to Germany. The latter was more than willing, and the German General Staff lost little time in forming Finnish military—Jäger (hunter)—detachments in Germany from young Finns mainly belonging to the bourgeoisie who had fled to Germany and were there armed and trained. These battalions were used by the Germans on the Russian front mainly for reconnaissance and espionage purposes.

After the War the Finnish battalions which had been trained and organised in Germany formed the nucleus of the Finnish counter-revolutionary forces and provided a large proportion of the leaders of the Finnish Army and of the Lapua (fascist) movement. With the outbreak of the March Revolution in Russia, there was a wave of enthusiasm throughout Finland, and on July 18, 1917, the Finnish Diet, in which there was then a majority of Socialists (103 out of 200), proclaimed its sovereign rights in all matters concerning Finnish home affairs. It also promulgated a number of social reforms, but it was willing

to recognise Russia's supremacy in military matters and in foreign affairs.

However, the Kerensky Government, at the request of the reactionary Finnish bourgeoisie, dissolved the Diet, and it was not till after the establishment of the Soviet Government that Finland obtained her independence. On December 6, 1917, the new Diet (elections had taken place in October and the Socialists had lost their majority), proclaimed the independence of Finland, and on December 31, 1917, the Council of People's Commissars decided to recognise the independence of Finland as being in consonance with the Soviet principle of the right of all countries to self-determination. This decision was embodied in a decree, January 4, 1918.

At the same time it was decided to organise a joint Russian-Finnish Commission to work out the necessary details of the separation of Finland from Russia. The question of the Soviet-Finnish frontiers was settled in October, 1920, at a time, be it noted, when Soviet Russia was still in the midst of civil war and was being subjected to armed foreign intervention and blockade.

The Soviet revolution in Russia had, of course, a tremendous effect on the working-class movement in Finland, and between November 14-20 there was a general strike, which forced the Finnish Diet to ratify the social legislation promulgated by the previous moderate socialist Diet in July, 1917, but although there were strong popular movements for the formation of a Soviet Government in Finland, there was division of opinion and consequent hesitation in the Central Committee of the Finnish Social Democratic Party, as well as among the trade union leaders.

In the meantime, the reactionaries were not idle. Immediately on the conclusion of the general strike, they

started forming White Guard detachments, they concentrated large reserves of foodstuffs and other supplies in the north as far as possible from Helsinki and other large towns (where the revolutionary movement was strongest), appealed for foreign help against the Bolsheviks, and, on January 12, 1918, the Diet adopted a resolution to establish a firm government, investing the former Tsarist General Mannerheim with dictatorial powers. Mannerheim established his seat of government in Vasa, and here he was soon followed by the greater part of the Government, who knew they had little support in the capital.

The reply of the organised workers to this move was to form their own Government, January 28, 1918, in Helsingfors—a Government with a fairly mild revolutionary home programme. All the more important and most populated districts of southern Finland recognised the proletarian Government.

The workers' Government of Finland treated its opponents with the utmost leniency. The maximum penalty was either imprisonment or fine. The "Whites" were allowed luxuries in prison, where their conditions approximated to life in a good hotel and they were able to carry on intrigues from their cells. One result of this was that Svinhuvud, a leader of the counter-revolutionaries, imprisoned in Helsingfors, was able to escape to Germany. There he obtained German military aid and, returning to Vasa via Sweden, he subsequently became the head of the "White" Government of Finland.

There followed three and a half months of hard struggle between the Vasa Mannerheim Government and the Helsingfors Socialist Government. Soviet Russia was then too weak to give the latter much support, but a number of the Russian troops who were still in Finland



supported it. However, by the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk, March, 1918, these troops had to be withdrawn, and only a handful (about 1,000) remained as volunteers to help the Socialist Government to fight the Vasa Government.

In the meantime, Mannerheim's appeal to the Germans for help found a ready response, and in February, 1918, most of the Finnish battalions which had been formed in Germany went back to Finland to support Mannerheim. The latter also had the support of the Swedish reactionaries, who, in spite of the official attitude of "neutrality" of the Swedish Government, gave money, arms and some thousands of volunteers to the Mannerheim clique.

But all this did not suffice to overcome the Red Guards of the Workers' Government. It was only when, in April, 1918, *Germany landed a large force under General von der Goltz at Hangö to support him, that "Liberator" Mannerheim was able to overthrow the Finnish workers' Government.*

The Germans, of course, did not care two hoots for Finland's welfare as such. They were actuated by purely strategic considerations in sending this help to Finland. This was subsequently disclosed by Von der Goltz himself quite frankly in his memoirs, when he said that "his object was to form 'the corner-stone of German command of the sea in the Baltic. The German troops and ships,' he wrote, 'would threaten Leningrad, and flank the Murmansk Railway, the Entente's road of entry into Russia.'"<sup>1</sup>

The last battle between the "Reds" and "Whites" took place on May 2, and on May 15, Mannerheim entered Helsinki.

Then followed an orgy of terror. We have already referred to this on an earlier page; here it will be interesting to note the evidence of Mr. Josiah C. Wedgwood, who, on May 29, 1919, declared in Parliament:

<sup>1</sup> We take this quotation from *The Times*, December 14, 1939.

"With the help of German armies which were landed in Finland, and in co-operation with the White Guards of Finland under General Mannerheim, the Red revolution was suppressed. They suppressed it by the most shocking series of atrocities. . . . The number of men and women arrested during the first weeks of May, 1918, was about 90,000 . . . and of these 15,000 to 20,000 were shot out of hand. Red prisoners were commonly decimated, sometimes twice over, and then the survivors were searched for suspects. . . .

"In that way the following were executed: at Rebe-maki, 5,000; at Lahti, 2,000; at Viborg 4,000, and so on. At Lahti 200 women were taken out early one morning in the second week of May, a fortnight after the end of the fighting, and were mown down in a batch with machine-guns. The remaining 70,000 were confined in prison camps under a régime of almost incredible barbarity. . . . Over one-third died in four months, not merely from starvation; they were even deprived of water. . . ."

The indignation aroused at these atrocities was such that General Mannerheim was at that time refused permission to come to England.

The extent of the terror may further be gauged from the following fact (which seems incredible, but has been related by reliable witnesses), that among leading circles of the "Whites" there was serious discussion as to the advisability of selling their revolutionary prisoners to Germany in return for minerals and fertilisers required by Finland! The only reason why these projects came to naught was that, soon after the triumph of the "Whites," Germany was defeated and was no longer in a position to bargain with Finland or with anyone else.

Subsequently, there was a strip of land in the centre of Helsingfors pre-eminently suitable for building

purposes which, however, no one would purchase because it was notorious for the fact that 3,000 revolutionaries had been executed and buried there.

Later, after an attempt to form a monarchy under German tutelage, Finland was declared a Republic and a new seemingly democratic constitution was adopted. But the actual government in Finland was more in the nature of a semi-fascist régime.

In this connection, it may be well to point out that, in view of the numerous political parties in Finland, the Finnish Government only rarely had a firm majority in the Diet. For instance, in 1929 the so-called Progressive Party (bourgeois liberal in home affairs, Chauvinist in questions concerning foreign affairs), had only seven members out of 200 in the Diet; nevertheless it formed the Government! Real power lay and still rests in the hands mainly of the Army leaders and Schutz Corps organised in 1917 and forming the backbone of the Finnish White Guards in the Civil War of 1918. This Schutz Corps was and is made up mainly of the sons of the town, well-to-do bourgeoisie and rich peasants, and numbers over 100,000. It is organised very much on the same principles as the Army, with similar arms, etc., and is supported partly by the State and partly by contributions from municipal budgets, wealthy factory owners, bankers, farmers, etc. Owing to its constitution, the Schutz Corps is, of course, a more reliable organ of power than the regular Army—a conscript army—which naturally has in its ranks the sons of workers and poor peasants.

Throughout the whole period of the existence of the Finnish Republic, only an extremely moderate socialist and trade union movement has been permitted to exist, with the result, for instance, that trade union membership, which in 1917 stood at 161,000 and in 1930, in spite

of brutal repressions, at about 150,000, now only stands at 90,000.

In 1920, the Finnish Socialist Working Class Party was formed (out of Left elements of the Finnish Social Democratic Party), but it was subjected to continual repression, and in 1921 fourteen of its leading members were imprisoned. In spite of this, the Finnish Socialist Workers' Party obtained twenty-seven seats in the 1922 elections, but in 1923 the Government arrested 200 leaders of the party and of the trade unions, as well as all the party M.Ps. It suppressed many of the party papers and subsequently liquidated the legal existence of the Finnish Socialist Workers' Party.

The repression, not only of Communist, but also of Left socialist and trade union elements was accompanied by brutal beatings up, kidnappings, etc., by fascist elements without interference by the Finnish authorities. The high light of the fascist terrorism and the way in which it was blessed by the Finnish so-called democratic Government, is perhaps best illustrated by the rôle played by the Lapua Party in the 1930 elections.

In case our readers have forgotten the origin of the name "Lapua," we may remind them that in November, 1929, a group of fascist hooligans attacked a peaceful gathering of young workers in a club in Lapua, a village in north-west Finland. The workers were beaten up and the windows, furniture, etc., of the club were demolished.

The reaction to this episode of the Finnish Government was characteristic. Instead of prosecuting the hooligan "patriots," they issued a circular forbidding the wearing of red shirts! (Some of the workers at the above-mentioned meeting had worn red shirts.) Emboldened by this, the Lapuans, in December, 1929, sent a deputation to Helsinki, which was received by the President of the



Republic and members of the Government and by leaders of the political parties. At the demand of the Lapuan delegation, a law was passed by the Diet whereby numerous Left workers' societies were suppressed. A subsequent conference held by the Lapua Party in March, 1930, was not only permitted, but the then President of Finland sent the Conference a wire of greeting. Now to turn to the 1930 elections.

The Lapua Party, as a preliminary to the election campaign, held an enormous demonstration in Helsinki with the blessing of the President and Government. The *Daily Telegraph*, July 8, 1930, reported:

"According to Reuter, the President of the Finnish Republic, the members of the Cabinet, General Mannerheim, and all the diplomatic Ministers were present, as well as a huge crowd of some 20,000 spectators. Dr. Relander, the President, was among the speakers. He referred to the patriotic character of the demonstration, and pointed out that it had been carried out on constitutional lines."

Pretence at legality was, however, soon dropped. The *Daily Herald's* correspondent cabled from Copenhagen, July 20:

"The situation in Finland has taken a very serious turn, for the Lapuans (Fascists) have extended their reign of terror to the Social Democrats, as well as the Communists.

"M. Hakkila, the Socialist Vice-President of the Finnish Parliament and Mayor of Tammerfors, was abducted by Lapua bandits while on his way home in a motor-car on Friday afternoon.

"He was taken to the Lapua headquarters, but it seems that his kidnappers were afraid of keeping captive a prominent Socialist, and he was set free yesterday.

He was put in a motor-car and sent to Tammerfors, where he arrived this morning. The townspeople gave him a great welcome" (July 21, 1930).

How did the Finnish Government react? The report continued: "It was found almost impossible to get the Government and the police to take up the case, because the whole power in Finland is really in the hands of the Lapuans, and a free election campaign is impossible."

This was not the whole of the picture. *The Times* correspondent cabled on the same date from Helsingfors:

"The Cabinet has issued a decree forbidding Communists to arrange election meetings or otherwise pursue their activities in connection with the forthcoming elections. The decree is hailed with satisfaction in Conservative quarters. The Diet on Tuesday passed Bills precluding Communists from taking part in municipal elections, but a Bill preventing their participation in Parliamentary elections had to be postponed" (July 21, 1939).

On the other hand, according to the same correspondent, the Liberals and Socialists protested against these draconic decrees. Thus *Socialidemokraati* was indignant and wrote: "The terror continues, and therefore all law-abiding citizens must mobilise to protect the Constitution."

At the end of the election the Lapuans freely admitted their guilt in the kidnappings, etc. Four hundred and four members sent a deputation to the Minister of the Interior and handed him a list of the offenders.

Replying to the deputation, reported the *Daily Herald*, October 21, 1930, "the Minister said he appreciated the causes which had brought about the Lapua movement, and believed that the Courts would take into consideration the fact that all had acted from patriotic motives."

Out of the 404 who had surrendered, only two who were directly concerned in kidnapping were detained.

The question of these outrages came before the Diet when it reassembled, and the Government pleaded that it was helpless.

*The Times* correspondent cabled from the Finnish capital:

"The Prime Minister, M. Svinhufvud, delivered a speech defending the Cabinet's policy during recent weeks, especially in respect to the Lapua (anti-Communist) movement. He explained at some length the reasons for the Cabinet's policy of leniency in regard to the offences which had been committed and for which the Cabinet had been severely criticised by large sections of the nation. He assured the Diet that the recent political unrest had been so intense that strong measures by the Government would have resulted in civil war and bloodshed, as the Lapuans were determined to accomplish their objects. The Cabinet, he said, preferred a policy of moral pressure, and this policy was the wisest. Though there was still a certain amount of unrest, the campaign of outrage had apparently ended. The offenders would be punished and the Diet purged of communism."<sup>1</sup>

The Lapuans were naturally not intimidated by the "moral pressure" and continued to warn the Diet that they and not the Diet were the real Government of the country.

In the spring of 1932 the Lapuans threatened an armed march on the capital, because they were not given a free hand to deal as they liked with their political opponents. What had they (the Lapuans) been doing? *The Times* Helsingfors correspondent reported: "For weeks gangs

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, October 24, 1930.

of extremists have committed outrages against working men's clubs throughout the countryside. Last night armed men, hundreds strong, opened fire on the working men's club at Maentsala, where M. Erich, a Labour Member of the Diet, was delivering a lecture. Panic was caused among the audience, which included women and children. A policeman was wounded."<sup>1</sup>

This was too much for the authorities, but when the latter tried to protect the victims, several thousand Lapuans and Schutz Corps members were "concentrated at Maentsala and elsewhere, about forty miles north of Helsinki, in armed formation, in order to press their political claims."<sup>2</sup>

One of these political claims was the dismissal of the Minister of the Interior because he had taken "resolute measures against the direct action methods of the Lapuans."

The situation continued to grow more ugly. "Troops are held in readiness, and tanks, machine-guns, and artillery have been brought to Helsinki," cabled *The Times* correspondent on the following day. "Soldiers and police are guarding the railways and roads, and military detachments are reported to be occupying strategic points. So far the Civil Guards have not been called out, a fact which has attracted some attention, because a number of them have joined the Lapuan forces."<sup>3</sup>

Two days later an Exchange cable from Helsinki continued the story: "Lapuan leaders have removed their headquarters from Maentsala to Vanaja, south of Tavasterhus, which is sixty miles, or about twice as far as Maentsala, from the capital. The authorities of Tavasterhus seem to be powerless, and the chief of the Civic Corps has been suspended. A report, at present

<sup>1</sup> *Times*, February 29, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, March 1, 1932.



unconfirmed, declares that a battalion of technical troops at Riromagi has gone over to the rebels."<sup>1</sup>

However, at the last moment the majority of the Civic Guards rallied to the side of the Government; the Lapuans apparently thought that surrender was the better part of valour, and the threatened insurrection collapsed.

"After surrendering their arms," cabled *The Times* correspondent, March 6, 1932, "*the rebels were allowed to pass through the lines and go home.*"

The Finnish Government showed remarkable leniency. In April, 1932, it introduced a Bill into the Diet granting an amnesty for the offences committed during the attempted revolt. The preamble to the Bill, after declaring that many who took part in the revolt "were not aware of the criminal nature of their action," continued: "The Government, in order to avoid extensive trials, has therefore decided to grant amnesty to the rank and file. All the leaders, instigators, military commanders and financial supporters must, however, stand their trial, as well as the Civil Servants guilty of offences in connection with the revolt."<sup>2</sup>

The rank and file were amnestied. But what of the leaders. How were they treated? In August of that year the High Court "found no cause for their detention!" However, the Government kept them in prison until October 13, 1932, when they decided to go on hunger strike. The result was cabled from Helsinki four days later: "The Government to-night decided to release all the detained Lapuan (anti-Communist) leaders on hunger strike except General Wallenius. The Government has ordered that they should be released as soon as possible and return home."<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Morning Post*, March 3, 1932.

<sup>2</sup> *Times*, April 13, 1932.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, October 18, 1932.

All this happened a short seven years ago. The years passed, but brought no essential change in the government of Finland. Miss Ellen Wilkinson, who returned from Finland in August, 1935, painted a very sombre picture of conditions in that country. She wrote: "A Liberal journalist who wrote an article against the revival of the death penalty in Finland had tear-gas bombs thrown into the hall of his flat. A meeting convened by the Finnish Peace Union, addressed by the famous Norwegian pacifist, Dr. Lange, was broken up by similar means. Such outrages, as the highly respected feminist, Fru. Marthe Erkkö, has pointed out, *go practically unpunished. But any offences against the repressive laws against the 'Left' by workers are met with long prison sentences.*"<sup>1</sup>

Miss Wilkinson summed up: "Unfortunately, the spread of German influence to-day has been accompanied by outbreaks of violence accompanied by approved Nazi methods."

In August, 1935, a Finnish communist general named Antikainen was sentenced to penal servitude for life on the charge of having roasted a boy alive in 1922. A special correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* averred: "It is known that *the Finnish judicial authorities who are concerned with the case are fully aware that the charge has been trumped up and has a purely political purpose.*" What were the judicial authorities afraid of? The report continued: "There is a strong fascist agitation in Finland which thrives on anti-communism."<sup>2</sup> The judicial authorities, if we may so characterise them, were terrified.

But the Supreme Court ordered a retrial, so that Antikainen could call witnesses, and the case was heard

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, September 3, 1935 (our italics).

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, August 30, 1935 (our italics).

again in May, 1936. What happened then is thus related by a *Manchester Guardian* correspondent in Helsinki: "There is news that three witnesses for the defence are held up in Leningrad, as the Finnish authorities have informed them that they cannot guarantee their safety."<sup>1</sup>

However, one witness named Matveyev was permitted to travel from the Soviet Union under promise of immunity to give evidence for the defence, but in the course of the trial he suddenly went over to the prosecution. Why did he do that? The answer was given by the *Daily Herald's* Helsinki correspondent:

"Evidence which resulted yesterday in Toivo Antikainen, ex-Soviet Army general, being sentenced to life imprisonment by a Helsinki court was obtained under threat of death.

"This was revealed to-day by the confession of Matveyev, defence witness, who dramatically went over to the prosecution on Wednesday.

"To-day, after the sentence, he went straight to the Russian Consulate and confessed the reason for his turnabout.

"After he gave his first evidence, he said, he had been approached by prosecution witnesses, who threatened to shoot him, giving him only sixteen hours to live unless he went back on his story."<sup>2</sup>

The life sentence on Antikainen was confirmed and, to add to the farce of the trial, "a Finnish fascist paper printed an account of the proceedings of the court some hours before they had taken place."<sup>3</sup>

At this time a stronger agitation was set on foot for

<sup>1</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, May 26, 1936.

<sup>2</sup> *Daily Herald*, May 30, 1936.

<sup>3</sup> *Manchester Guardian*, June 3, 1936 (our italics).

the suppression of the Social Democratic Party. The Coalition Party included it in their programme. However, at the General Election in July, 1936, the Social Democratic Party gained five seats, bringing the number of their deputies up to eighty-three in a House of 200. Unfortunately, the Fascists and ultra-Conservatives maintained their former strength. The Social Democratic gains were at the expense of the small Peasant and Liberal Parties. Reaction in the main remained unshaken.

In the General Election of July, 1939, the Social Democrats increased their representation to eighty-five and the ultra-Fascist Party lost seven of its fourteen seats. A coalition Government of Social Democrats, Agrarians and Progressives was formed. These results were hailed hopefully by progressive opinion throughout the world, but, as often happens in such cases, wishful thinking read far more into them than the facts warranted. The single-chamber Parliament does not rule Finland. Mannerheim, the Conservative and Fascist Parties and the Schutz Corps are still the real rulers of the country. No legislation can be carried in opposition to their wishes. A special correspondent of the *Yorkshire Post*, after the 1939 elections, cabled the following comment:

"What makes all Finnish happenings so problematic is the wide discrepancy still existing between popular feeling and the executive powers. The influence which the I.K.L. and Unionist Party still wield in all branches of the administration—Civil Service, Army, Navy, police and in particular among the so-called 'Protective Guards'—is quite incommensurate with the actual strength of these parties in Parliament. Hence the almost permanent latent danger of a coup which would thwart the progressive evolution of public sentiment towards Scandinavia and the democratic Great Powers



and throw the country back into the arms of Herr Hitler."<sup>1</sup>

During the course of the Finnish-Soviet negotiations, the *Daily Mail's* correspondent, in the course of a cable from Helsinki, described Mannerheim as "the uncrowned King of Finland." The fact is that Mannerheim's Government was established largely by German bayonets and the Governments which have since succeeded the first Mannerheim régime have all been elected and functioned under the shadow of the Schutz Corps, a volunteer body—over three times the strength of the standing Army—which would not permit any serious tampering with the existing social system.

General Mannerheim, the officer class, the Fascist and Conservative Party and the Schutz Corps constitute the sword of Damocles which hangs over the head of every Finnish Government and determines its home and foreign policy. So much for the widespread myth of liberal, democratic Finland.

But, irrespective of the régime in Finland, ask those who regard the Soviet action in that country as an act of imperialist aggression why has the Soviet Government, which has always proclaimed that differences in the political, economic and social organisation of states were no bar to friendly, diplomatic and trade relations between them, made such a *volte face* in the case of Finland to everything it has been preaching in this connection for the last twenty-two years?

The Soviet reply to this is that their step in Finland was purely an act of self-defence. Whatever Government may be in power in Finland, and whatever the results of the present events there, the U.S.S.R. has no intention

<sup>1</sup> *Yorkshire Post*, July 11, 1939.

of violating the independent sovereignty of Finland, both in regard to her home and foreign affairs. The Soviets have no intention of annexing Finland or of exploiting its wealth, resources and inhabitants for the benefit of the citizens of the U.S.S.R. Naturally, when the Soviets talk of self-defence against Finland, it is not because the mighty U.S.S.R. has any fear of what Finland herself might do against her; it is the use which other Powers might make of her territory for an attack on the U.S.S.R. which has determined the Soviet Government to ensure that all important strategic points in Finland which, in the hands of hostile Powers, could menace the safety of the U.S.S.R. shall be in the hands of the latter.

We have seen how Finland was used precisely for this purpose of attacking Soviet Russia both by Germany and the Allied Powers during the early years of the independent existence of Finland. But it may be asked why should Finland let herself be used as a *place d'armes* against the U.S.S.R.? For two reasons. In the first place, because she would be powerless to prevent herself from being so used, even if she wished to prevent it. Secondly, it is by no means certain that she would not be a willing ally in such schemes. One of the most influential parties in Finland since 1918 is the Coalition Party, which represents the most reactionary circles of the industrial and financial bourgeoisie—extreme Finnish nationalists and militarists. This party stands for a "Great Finland," hates the U.S.S.R. like poison and agitates for the conquest of eastern Karelia and other so-called Finnish areas in the northern territory of the U.S.S.R. It was the extreme right wing of this party which formed the Lapua Party in 1930.

Another Party, the Progressives, also formed in 1918, although bourgeois liberal in regard to home policy, is

Chauvinist in foreign policy and has been inclined to support the "Big Finland" ideas. Again, the Swedish Party representing the Swedish bourgeoisie is very reactionary, and, except for the fact that it represents Swedish national interests in Finland, stands very near to the Coalition Party.

True, the two largest parties, the Social Democrats and Agrarians, stand, so far as their programmes go, for more friendly relations with the U.S.S.R., but we have already seen how powerless these parties are against the reactionaries, fascists and militarists of Finland.

After the defeat of Germany in the World War of 1914-18, General Mannerheim himself more than once sought to enlist Allied aid against the U.S.S.R. Thus, the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, in its article on Finland, says: "Mannerheim's popularity with the Right and the Army tempted him to exploit the military impotence of Soviet Russia. When, at the end of May, 1919, the Entente intervention on the Murmansk front brought the 237th Brigade [of the expeditionary force under the British Major-General Maynard] to the head of Lake Onega, the Finnish Government offered co-operation in return for the possession of Petrozavodsk. The offer being declined, a Finnish volunteer force nevertheless assaulted the town independently, but without success. Again, at the close of the year when the 'White Russian' General Yudenitch was marching on Petrograd, Mannerheim sounded the Allies on proposed Finnish intervention." But again the offer was declined. The reason the Entente declined was because the Russian "Whites," whom the Entente was helping, would not hear of a sovereign independent Finland.

Later Mannerheim made several attempts to obtain, now the help of Britain and her allies, now that of Germany and her friends to form a coalition against the

U.S.S.R. All this proves that there is nothing fantastic in the Soviet fear of the use of Finland by one or other Great Power against the Soviet Union.

The hostility of the great, and for that matter many of the small capitalist Powers to the U.S.S.R. is, of course, well known. In the course of the last few years, the way in which every attempt by the Soviet Government to form a common peace front against aggression has been rejected, the way in which the Soviet Union was cold-shouldered by Britain and France in the crisis of September, 1938, which ended in the notorious Munich "Peace Agreement" with Germany over the mutilated body of Czechoslovakia, the half-hearted way in which Britain and France conducted the negotiations with the U.S.S.R. after the disruption and annexation of the remnants of Czechoslovakia by Germany—all this could not but engender Soviet suspicion that at the first opportunity these Powers, with the help of the fascist Powers, would once again turn on the U.S.S.R.

Nor could these suspicions be allayed after the outbreak of the war with Germany in September, 1939. Everyone who has followed the British and foreign Press knows perfectly well that influential reactionary circles in this country and in France are in favour of switching the war on to an attack against the Soviet Union, either by a patched-up peace with Germany or by a tacit agreement with her behind the scenes. Discussing the key to the Soviet Government's policy towards Finland, Mr. G. E. R. Gedye (a noted newspaper correspondent and author of that brilliant book, *Fallen Bastions*), in a cable from Moscow, October 21, 1939, to the *New York Times*, said:

"Although some people resent hearing it, the key to Soviet aims is unchanged distrust of the great capitalist



governments, especially those headed by Neville Chamberlain and Edouard Daladier. . . .

"In Estonia and Latvia she has obtained air, naval and military bases. In Lithuania she also obtained the right to fortify the frontier against Germany—which the blindest supporter of the theory of Russo-German friendship cannot maintain is directed against any one but Germany. And she is trying by means of negotiation to obtain the same advantages in Finland."

Again, Sir Walter T. Layton, in the course of an article in the *News Chronicle*, November 2, 1939, stated: "The view is held in some quarters that while in other circumstances it would be desirable to crush Hitlerism once and for all, Bolshevism is a far greater danger which will spread like a disease and destroy society. We should, therefore, make a patched-up peace with Germany, in order to present a united front against Russia. Those who hold this view are anxious not to make our terms with Germany too stiff."

And as regards France, the Paris correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* cabled his paper on December 7, 1939, that there is a "tendency among certain people in France to begin to treat not Hitler, but Stalin, as enemy No. 1." It would be easy to multiply such references almost indefinitely.

It seems to us that it is indeed not too fanciful to interpret the remarkable inactivity of the French and British air and other forces on the Western Front during Germany's smashing attack on Poland in the first couple of weeks of the war, as being largely inspired by the hope that once Germany had marched across Poland and reached the Soviet frontier then, pact or no pact with the Soviet Government, Germany would be unable to resist the temptation of marching into the rich cornfields

of Soviet Ukraine; thus the long-wished-for German-Soviet war would have become an accomplished fact. The Soviet Government, no doubt, saw this possibility, too, and forestalled it by herself marching into Western Ukraine and Western Belorussia.

Is it also not rather significant that the one case in which the League of Nations (which under present circumstances means, of course, Britain and France) have thought it necessary to meet and act in haste and to *expel* an "aggressor" was that of the action of the U.S.S.R. in Finland. How about Italy and Japan? They were not expelled. On the contrary, there were expressions of regret in many quarters when they resigned from the League after they had been named as aggressors. And yet was there any doubt at all that their acts of aggression were flagrant, blatant acts of imperialism? Indeed, in the case of Italy, her chair at the Council table stood empty, as if waiting the return of the prodigal, not only right up to December 9, 1939, the date when Italy's notice of withdrawal from the League expired, but the whole of the following week, when Italy was no longer even technically a member. This in spite of her fresh aggression against Albania in April, 1939. Moreover, the Albanian appeal against Italy was removed from the Agenda of the Assembly.

It has been argued that the Soviet action in Finland has lost the U.S.S.R. the moral support, at least for the time being, of the trade unions, the labour and liberal movements and of the progressive forces generally in Britain and other countries. There can be little doubt that the Soviet leaders were under no delusions and foresaw this, the more so since they had already been able to observe the effect on these circles of the Soviet Pact with Germany, the Soviet occupation of Western Ukraine and

Western Belorussia and their agreements with the Baltic states. But the Soviet Government evidently considered the possession of vital strategic points and the prevention of Finland being used as a *place d'armes* against the Soviet Union to be a much surer safeguard against an attack on their country than the retention of the "moral" support of labour and progressive circles in Britain and elsewhere.

Were they right in this calculation? We certainly do not minimise the importance of goodwill and moral support, but, after all, there is this to be said in favour of the Soviet contention: Abyssinia, Spain, China, Austria, Czechoslovakia and Albania all had the strong moral support of the labour, liberal and progressive circles the whole world over, but this "moral support" was powerless to prevent their rape and destruction as independent States. "Moral" support for a country is an excellent thing providing that country is strongly armed and entrenched; otherwise it is but a broken reed. Would this have been less true if one or more of the great Imperialist Powers had attacked the U.S.S.R.? What do you think?

## APPENDIX

*Summary of an Article by E. Fyedorov  
in the "Krassny Flot" ("Red Fleet"), November 12, 1939.*

AFTER welcoming the agreements with the Baltic states as corresponding with the needs of peace in eastern Europe and the defence of the U.S.S.R., Fyedorov pointed out that exactly the same aims were actuating the Soviet proposals to Finland, and continued:

"Leningrad is the second largest town in the U.S.S.R. It has a population of 3,500,000—almost equal to that of the whole of Finland. The volume of the industrial output of Leningrad is nearly a quarter of the whole industrial output of the U.S.S.R. and is by far in excess of the industrial output of the whole of Finland. Leningrad is one of the most important centres of the shipbuilding, machine construction, electrical and chemical industry and is the only Soviet port on the Baltic."

After referring to the great rôle played by Leningrad in the revolutionary movement, and how this has endeared the town named after Lenin to every Soviet citizen, the author proceeded:

"Leningrad is situated deep within the eastern part of the Gulf of Finland, some 220 miles from the entrance to the Gulf and thirty-two kilometres (about twenty miles) from the land frontier of Finland. Consequently, it is directly exposed to the danger of aerial and naval bombardment and even to direct land artillery fire in so far as it has not sufficiently deep defences."



The author pointed out the importance of the latter and the absolute necessity, if Leningrad is to be effectively defended, for the erection of a series of defensive naval lines along the whole length of the shores of the Finnish Gulf. The front line of such a defence, declared Fyedorov, must be established at the entrance to the Gulf of Finland in order to make it possible to destroy the naval forces of any enemy attempting to force its way into the Gulf. "But the creation of such defence lines is only thinkable," said the author, "providing both its flanks have powerful artillery fortifications. The forty-five-mile-wide entrance to the Gulf can only be defended by long-range batteries from both sides, e.g. from the northern side in the Hangö region, and on the southern side from the Dagö region."

"The speed of modern battleships," continued Fyedorov, "and the distances in the Baltic Sea makes it possible for an enemy during the greater part of the year to concentrate, under cover of the dark hours, considerable naval forces for a break through into the Gulf. In order to counter such activities, the fleet must be capable of rapid manœuvring and co-operation with the coastal defences and the aviation defending the entrance to the Gulf of Finland. . . . All this makes it essential for us to establish a naval base in the region of the northern shore of the entrance to the Gulf of Finland in the district of Hangö."

In the region of Hangö there is a group of rocky fairways leading from the Gulf of Finland to the west and from the Aaland Archipelago to the east and south. Here, the author pointed out, there are a number of well-protected harbours providing room for naval vessels of all kinds, including big battleships. With a base in this area, the Soviet Fleet would be in a strong defensive position. Operating from Hangö in the north and from Baltiski in the south, the Soviet Fleet, in conjunction with the

coastal defences and aviation, could "catch an enemy by a pincer movement and destroy him."

"Not to create in this region a proper system of defence," continued Fyedorov, "is tantamount to giving an enemy who had seized the Aaland Archipelago and who was utilising the rocky Aalandshaf-Hangö fairways the possibility of avoiding our positions in the south of the entrance to the Gulf, and by going north to come out in the rear and penetrate into the eastern section of the Gulf of Finland, thus making vulnerable our naval frontiers and the approaches to the town of Lenin."

The above forms a short outline of the reasons which have induced the U.S.S.R. to propose to Finland the cession of territory in the Hangö region for the purpose of erecting Soviet naval bases. "These proposals are the more reasonable," stated the author, "in that the effective defence of the entrance to the Gulf of Finland is also of importance to the security of Finland herself. The keys of the Gulf of Finland, the keys of the western naval regions, we are defending is the Hangö—Moon Sound regions. These keys must be kept in good hands." There are also other important strategic points:

"A second no less important defensive line for us must also be a system of defence which includes the existing coastal defence and the system of fortifications which it is necessary to establish in the islands of the eastern sections of the Gulf of Finland and in the district of Stirsuden—Bjorkö—Humalioki (off the Karelian Isthmus)."

These areas are of the utmost importance for the security of Leningrad:

"The reliable defence of the direct approaches to Leningrad and of the chief base of the Baltic Fleet

is also unthinkable without the islands of Suursari. [Hogland], Seiskari [Sommars], Lavarsari, and Tutar-sari. These islands are situated in the widest part of the Gulf of Finland and control all the routes leading from the entrance of the Gulf of Finland to Leningrad."

The fortifications of these islands is important both for this reason and also because in this way the U.S.S.R. would obtain "a sufficiently safe rear district for the testing of its vessels and the training of the Red Banner Baltic Fleet."

After pointing out that the Soviet-Finnish frontiers in the far north, in the district of the Rybachi and Sredni Peninsulas, are clumsy and unnatural, he proceeded:

"The military weakness of Finland and her almost complete lack of northern defences places these peninsulas under the constant menace of seizure by an enemy. This would enable the enemy to control the Kola Bay to some extent and thus block the north—Murmansk—and threaten the Murmansk coast. The Kola Peninsula is important, not only because of its fishing and mineral resources, but also because it is on the main route to Leningrad from the north and thus forms an approach to it from the latter."

The author discussed the fact that the Soviet proposals to Finland to exchange territory on the Karelian Isthmus was conditioned by the need to move the frontier to a distance sufficient to exclude any possibility of Leningrad being shelled by artillery and to make it possible to employ Soviet aviation to counter any air attack by an enemy who might seize Finnish territory and use it for this purpose. The same explanation holds good for the proposed exchange of territory in the north.

"Our proposals," continued the author, "have been made in the interest of the security and peaceful labour

of the 183,000,000 population of the U.S.S.R., they are equally in the interest of the security of the sovereign rights of Finland herself. However, some Finnish statesmen fail to understand this, and yet it is surely crystal clear that neither the armed forces nor the national economy of Finland are sufficiently strong for her to solve unaided the problem of defending the entrance to the Gulf of Finland and the Rybachi and Sredni Peninsulas."

"The Finnish Fleet," he pointed out, "is extremely weak, capable of undertaking only very limited defence measures." The Finnish armed coastal vessels are very lightly armed and slow and "in conditions where manoeuvring is difficult, amongst the rocks, they would form targets for, rather than a formidable force against, a strong enemy."

"The geographical position of Finland, the insecurity of her communications on the Baltic Sea, her economic weakness and finally the absence of any menace to her frontiers from the east—all this points to the necessity of Finland rallying to the side of those who protect the independence of the small Baltic states. Only by way of mutual assistance with the U.S.S.R. can a country like Finland withstand hostile aviation which could deal untold damage to her national economy."

The article concluded: "Provocateurs, war incendiaries and their understudies try to represent the Soviet proposals to Finland as a threat not only to her sovereign rights, but to the security of the Scandinavian countries and, in particular, to Sweden. The Soviet people repudiate with indignation these dirty slanders of international political scoundrels. We know that the only consideration which has actuated our Government has always been and still is the desire to limit the war zone and to safeguard



the life and peaceful labour of the Soviet people and of the peoples of our neighbouring states. Undeviatingly true to the principle of its peace policy, the Soviet Government will find ways and means for securing the complete safety of the marine and land frontiers of our Fatherland, including those on the far north-west."

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